

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE BERLIN RADIO WAR:
BROADCASTING IN COLD WAR BERLIN
AND THE SHAPING OF POLITICAL
CULTURE IN DIVIDED GERMANY, 1945-
1961

Nicholas J. Schlosser, Ph.D. 2008

Dissertation Directed By: Professor Jeffrey Herf, Department of History

This dissertation explores how German radio journalists shaped political culture in the two postwar Germanys. Specifically, it examines the development of broadcast news reporting in Berlin during the first sixteen years of the Cold War, focusing on the reporters attached to the American sponsored station RIAS¹ Berlin and the radio stations of the German Democratic Republic. During this period, radio stations on both sides of the Iron Curtain waged a media war in which they fought to define the major events of the early Cold War. The tension between objectivity and partisanship in both East and West Berlin came to define this radio war. Radio stations constantly negotiated this tension in an attempt to encourage listeners to adopt a specific political worldview and forge a bond between broadcaster and listener. Whereas East German broadcasters ultimately eschewed objectivity in favor of partisan news reporting defined by Marxist-Leninist ideology, RIAS attempted to combine factual reporting with concerted efforts to undermine the legitimacy of the German Democratic Republic.

The study contributes to a number of fields of study. First, I contribute to scholarship that has examined the nature, development, and influence of political culture.

¹ Radio in the American Sector

Related to this, the study considers how political ideas were received and understood by listeners. This work also adds to a growing field of scholarship that goes beyond examining the institutional histories of Germany's broadcasters and analyzes how German broadcasters influenced society itself. Related to this, the dissertation adds to the historiography on how the United States used media outlets as a means of fighting the Cold War. The dissertation is based on archival research done in Germany and the United States. It draws on files from the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv in Babelsberg, the Bundesarchiv in Berlin and Koblenz, the Landesarchiv in Berlin, the archive of the former East German Ministry for State Security in Berlin, and the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, MD.

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by

Nicholas J. Schlosser

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Advisory Committee
Professor Jeffrey Herf, Chair
Professor John Lampe
Associate Professor Michael David-Fox
Associate Professor Christopher Hanson
PD Dr. Philipp Gassert

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To My Parents Joseph and Jennifer and my sister Catriona

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Abbreviations

AFO	Archivierte Feindobjekt-Akte
AdSD	Archiv der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
ANH	Alte und Neue Heimat
AZZ	Aus der Zone, für die Zone
BAK	Bundesarchiv Koblenz
BAB	Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde
BdL	Büro der Leitung
BRD/FRG	Bundesrepublik Deutschland/Federal Republic of Germany
BSZ	Berlin spricht zur Zone
BStU	Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatsicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union/Christian Democratic Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)
DDR/GDR	Deutsches Demokratisches Republik/German Democratic Republic
DHM	Deutsches Historisches Museum
DIAS	Drahtfunk im Amerikanisches Sektor/Wired Broadcasting in the American Sector
DIVO	Deutsche Institut für Volksumfragen
DRA	Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv
DZV	Deutsches Zentralverwaltung fuer Volksbildung/German Central Administration for Peoples' Education
FDGB	Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund

FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei/Free Democratic Party
HICOG	Office of the US High Commissioner for Germany
IEV	International Evaluation Staff
ICD	Information Control Division
ISB	Information Services Branch
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschland/Communist Party of Germany
KW	Kurzwelle, (Shortwave)
LAB	Landesarchiv, Berlin
LDP	Liberal Demokratische Partei
LW	Langewelle, Long Wave
MfS	Ministerium für Staatsicherheits, “ <i>Stasi</i> ”
MW	Mittelwelle, Medium Wave
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, College Park
NDR	Norddeutsche Funk
NWDR	Nordwest Deutsche Rundfunk/Northwest German Radio
OMGUS	Office of the Military Government, United States
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
PWD	Psychological Warfare Division
RFE	Radio Free Europe
RIAS	Rundfunk im Amerikanisches Sektor/Radio in the American Sector
RL	Radio Liberty

SAPMO	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv
SED	Sozialistische Einheits Partei Deutschland/Socialist Unity Party of Germany
SFB	Sender Freies Berlin/Radio Free Berlin
SWF	Sudwestfunk
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland/Social Democratic Party of Germany
SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone /Soviet Occupation Zone
SMA	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland /Soviet Military Administration in Germany
StRK	Staatliche Rundfunk Komitee/State Radio Committee
UKW	Ultrakurzwelle, Ultra Short Wave (FM)
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Service (Used for USIA Operations in Europe)
VOA	Voice of America
WZ	Werktag der Zone
ZAIG	Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe/Central Assessment and Information Group
ZK	Zentralkomitee

Introduction

This dissertation explores how German radio journalists shaped political culture in the two postwar Germanys. Specifically, it examines the development of broadcast news reporting in Berlin during the first sixteen years of the Cold War, focusing on the reporters attached to the American sponsored station RIAS¹ Berlin and the radio stations of the German Democratic Republic. During this period, radio stations on both sides of the Iron Curtain waged a media war in which they fought to define the major events of the early Cold War. The tension between objectivity and partisanship in both East and West Berlin came to define this radio war. Radio stations constantly negotiated this tension in an attempt to encourage listeners to adopt a specific political worldview and forge a bond between broadcaster and listener. Whereas East German broadcasters ultimately eschewed objectivity in favor of partisan news reporting defined by Marxist-Leninist ideology, RIAS attempted to combine factual reporting with concerted efforts to undermine the legitimacy of the German Democratic Republic. RIAS's approach proved to be the most effective and popular with East German listeners, and RIAS broadcasts would play a critical role in events such as the June 17, 1953 popular uprising in East Germany.

This study engages two broad themes. First, I examine the development and transmission of political cultures through the use of radio broadcasting. Second, I analyze how these different political cultures were understood and received by listeners, specifically the citizens of the German Democratic Republic. In examining these two

¹ Radio in the American Sector

themes, I consider a number of interrelated questions. First, why did RIAS become the preferred source for news and information amongst East German listeners and why did the broadcasters of the GDR fail to offer an alternative capable of matching RIAS's popularity? Second, how did journalists negotiate the balance between partisanship and reporting? Third, how did the specific historical circumstances of postwar Germany come to define the nature of broadcast commentary and reporting? Finally, did the legacies of the Third Reich and the challenges of the Cold War shape the standards and principles guiding broadcast journalism in divided Berlin?

This is the first study to closely examine the development of broadcast journalism in Berlin during the Cold War. Examining radio in Cold War Berlin gives historians an excellent opportunity to investigate the relationship between the diffusion and reception of political culture. This work is thus a contribution to the study of the reception of ideas.² As a city officially under joint occupation yet in actuality divided between the two German states, Berlin was an important arena in which the two Germanys and the Cold War superpowers came together. At the same time, officials on both sides of the Cold War conflict undertook considerable efforts to understand the impact of broadcasts upon listeners through the use of surveys and listener assemblies. The fact that the border between East and West Berlin remained open until 1961 gave western observers the opportunity to survey East Germans about listening preferences. These surveys provide historians with a window into listening habits and attitudes that allows us to investigate

² Some of the theoretical contributions to the field of "rezeptionsgeschichte" are Gunter Grimm ed. *Literatur und Leser* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1975), Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), and Martyn P Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," *History and Theory* 32 (1993): 248-272. For examples of works that examine the reception of ideas in German history, see Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992) and Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens: Ohio University Press and Swallow Press, 2006).

questions regarding political preferences and understanding. Thanks to the diverse number of polls, listener meetings, and letters available to scholars, historians of radio in Germany can examine many of the characteristics shaping the symbiotic relationship between broadcaster and listener. Listeners often saw radio stations as both repositories of information and conduits to the governments that stood behind these broadcasters. While the sources used (surveys, letters, assembly minutes) cannot give us a comprehensive picture of how all East Germans thought, they nevertheless give us valuable insight into how many individuals in East Germany interpreted and understood radio broadcasts. Furthermore, they reveal that listeners were not passive subjects, but active participants in the Berlin radio war who paid close attention to the style, content, and language of radio programs. Losing listeners was evidence that one side was losing the overall ideological struggle. Consequently, audience decisions played an important role in radio programming.

As Thomas Lindenberger notes, studying broadcasting in Cold War Germany also gives historians an excellent opportunity to examine the dynamics of the West German-East German relationship. While the stations came from different sides of the Cold War, they nevertheless addressed the same German audience.³ The fact that the two German states developed along different lines: one a liberal, multi-party democracy and the other a communist, single-party dictatorship, also allows us to compare and contrast the development of broadcasting in both types of societies. Drawing on Lindenberger's assertion that the binary opposition between ideologies helped to shape and define the Cold War media conflict, I argue that we can only fully understand the development of

³ Thomas Lindenberger, "Geteilte Welt, geteilter Himmel?," in *Zwischen Pop und Propaganda: Radio in der DDR*, ed. Klaus Arnold and Christoph Classen (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2004), 27.

broadcast journalism in Berlin if we examine the broadcasts within the context of a radio war between RIAS Berlin and the GDR's stations.⁴

A critical point of difference between the two sides of the radio war was the level to which reports needed to be accurate. A critical part of this dissertation will be to examine how both RIAS and the stations of East Germany confronted, assessed, and negotiated basic assumptions about objectivity when reporting the major events of the early Cold War. Throughout this period, radio officials and journalists on both sides of the Iron Curtain cast the conflict between RIAS and the GDR's broadcasters as a rivalry between "objective" and "subjective" reporting. In its simplest sense, RIAS was "objective," presenting factual, straight news broadcasts as opposed to the GDR's stations, which pursued overtly propagandistic broadcasts promoting communism. This picture is much too simple and fails to acknowledge RIAS's primarily political mission of undermining the GDR's government. It also does not acknowledge the periodic debates that emerged within the GDR's broadcasting institutions concerning the balance between propaganda and journalism. Yet, it would be wrong to characterize both RIAS and Berliner Rundfunk as simply propaganda stations that focused on refuting what the other has said. When the East German diarist Victor Klemperer wrote in 1950 that RIAS: "says the same about the SU [Soviet Union] as we say about the USA [United States]. Exactly the same,"⁵ he failed to acknowledge fundamental differences between the two sides of the radio war when it came to news reporting.

For both sides of the radio war, "objectivity" was neither an ideal nor a principle of ethical journalism. It was an approach to journalism loaded with political significance.

⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁵ Victor Klemperer, *The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1945-1959*, trans. and ed. Martin Chalmers (London: Phoenix Paperbacks, 2003), 329 (August 25, 1950).

For East Germany's information chiefs, "objectivity" was a bourgeois construct designed to mask true class interests. Thus, to claim to be objective was a political stance.

Furthermore, East German leaders believed radio journalists needed to agitate the masses and help establish socialism in Germany. Nevertheless many news reporters in the GDR felt that, despite its bourgeois implications, professional, factual reporting was a tactical necessity. Many East German reporters knew that the propagandistic tone and character of the GDR's news broadcasts were sending East German listeners to RIAS.

Sporadically, as will be seen in my analysis of broadcasting during the Berlin airlift (Chapter Two) and the June 17, 1953 Uprising (Chapter Four), GDR reporters intermittently tried to downplay the overtly political nature of their broadcasts in order to attract listeners. Yet, these efforts were always met with a crackdown from the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) and a reassertion of state control over broadcasting.

For RIAS, the relationship between objectivity and politics required much more negotiation and compromise. RIAS's staff argued that objective reporting was synonymous with "accurate" and "straight" news reporting. When RIAS was created in 1946, its founders in the US Occupation Government hoped that the station would represent and promote traditional standards of objective reporting that stressed not only accuracy, but also impartiality. Along with newspapers and institutions of education, American authorities believed radio could be an effective means of promoting the liberal-democratic reconstruction of Germany.⁶ However, with the outbreak of the Cold War in 1947, the US authorities in Germany conscripted RIAS into a multimedia campaign

⁶ Larry Hartenian, *Controlling Information in U.S. Occupied Germany, 1945-1949: Media Manipulation and Propaganda* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003). See also Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), Norbert Frei, *Amerikanische Lizenzpolitik und deutsche Pressetradition: Die Geschichte der Nachkriegszeitung Südost-Kurier* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1986), and James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

aimed at confronting the Soviet Union and the communists in Germany. While reporters continued to adhere to the principles of accuracy and independence, news broadcasts were rarely unbiased or neutral. RIAS's reporters frankly admitted their opposition to communism and the GDR, citing it as their moral and ethical responsibilities to report on the injustices committed by the GDR government and promote German reunification. By 1949, RIAS's primary mission was to provide an alternative news source for East German listeners and undermine and destabilize the GDR. However, despite this overtly political aim, the station's news staff nevertheless strictly adhered to the principle that news needed to be accurate and presented with little editorial coloration. However, this had as much to do with providing East Germans with a clear, distinct alternative to the GDR's broadcast as it did with promoting liberal-democratic broadcast journalism. Thus, for RIAS's reporters, "objective" reporting was neither neutral nor unbiased reporting. It was factual reporting designed to achieve a political end.

Consequently, the reporters at RIAS and Berlin Rundfunk acted not only as journalists, but also as public intellectuals and political actors. Some of the more notable commentators whose broadcasts I examine include Egon Bahr, Victor Klages, and Heinz Frentzel at RIAS, and Marcus Wolf, Gerhart Eisler, and Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler at the GDR stations. They not only presented information, but also used their commentaries to explain why events happened and why they were important, using prevailing symbols and narratives to provide context and meaning to their stories.

The dissertation focuses on the broadcasts of RIAS and the East German station Berliner Rundfunk. As a German station under US sponsorship, RIAS was one of many US funded stations designed to counteract communist news and bring alternate

viewpoints to those living behind the Iron Curtain. Created by the United States Military Government in 1946, the station remained under US control after the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. In 1953 it became an outlet of the United States Information Agency. Nevertheless, RIAS was a German broadcaster and perceived by Germans in West and East alike as *the* Berlin station. With the exception of four American control officers, RIAS's staff was made up entirely of Germans. Its editors, program directors, and reporters were all Germans, many of whom were born in Berlin and regions that were in the German Democratic Republic. An examination of RIAS allows us to examine the complex relationship between the United States and West Germany during the early Cold War, consider US efforts at denazification and Cold War alliance building, and investigate the development of a liberal political culture in West Germany and West Berlin. It also demonstrates the autonomous role played by Germans in the context of the superpower struggle.

Throughout the time period examined in this dissertation East Berlin was served by a number of stations. The station Berliner Rundfunk stood as the primary broadcaster for the city between 1945-52. In 1952, all broadcasting in the GDR was centralized under the control of three Berlin based broadcasters (called respectively I, II, and III). By the late 1950s, the GDR's State Radio Committee once again reorganized East Germany's broadcasting institutes, with Berliner Rundfunk again standing as the broadcaster for the GDR capital. However, due to the centralized nature of East Germany's media institutions, the GDR's broadcasters freely shared stories and presented unified political broadcasts. Furthermore, they shared the same personnel. Thus, while I focus primarily on Berliner Rundfunk, I examine the broadcasts of other stations as well,

especially Deutschlandsender, the GDR broadcaster designed specifically for West Germany.

I also consider the West Berlin public broadcaster Sender Freies Berlin. Founded in 1954, the West Berlin government promoted and sponsored the construction of SFB as a means of representing the interests of West Berlin. Although independent, SFB nevertheless remained closely aligned with RIAS in terms of programming and personnel. Before 1961, it also did not enjoy the same popularity as a source for news as RIAS amongst East German listeners. Thus, while I pay close attention to SFB broadcasts, especially during the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, my primary focus remains on RIAS. For similar reasons, I do not focus on either the British Broadcasting Corporation or the Armed Forces Network, both of which had a broadcasting presence in Berlin during the Cold War.

The timeframe for the study is from the founding of Berliner Rundfunk in 1945 until the resolution of the Berlin Crisis in 1961. 1961 marks an important caesura in the history of Cold War Berlin. The new status quo created by the building of the Berlin Wall was a regrettable, but tolerable, resolution to the Berlin Crisis of 1958-1961 for the US and Soviets. Over the course of the 1960s, the confrontational rhetoric would subside, and Berlin would no longer be the primary battleground of the Cold War. With the beginning of “Ostpolitik” in the late 1960s, a new state of affairs would be created as diplomatic relations were forged between the two German states. Thus, an analysis of RIAS after the Berlin Crisis would need to examine the changes brought about by the new political situation, and consequently require research beyond the scope of a single study. The 1950s was also a period in which radio reached a high point as a means for

mass communication and information before it was quickly supplanted by television during the 1960s in both Germanys.⁷

By examining radio stations on both sides of the Iron Curtain, it seeks to provide a comparative analysis as a means of stressing those elements of each station that were both common and unique. I examine and compare the personnel and programming decisions that were made by the directors of RIAS and the GDR's stations. However, I will also consider the close link between RIAS and the stations of the GDR and argue that one cannot fully understand broadcasting in West Berlin without also considering the important influence played by broadcasts from the GDR (and vice versa). Despite being a Western station backed by the US, the image of RIAS constituted an important component of East German political broadcasting and programming decisions. I also aim to situate the story of Berlin radio within the broader context of post-war German political and intellectual history. As a result, this work is as much an examination of the intellectual movements of the Cold War in Germany as it is an examination of mass media. I argue that, as much as they were media outlets, the radio stations of Berlin were also political and intellectual actors.

Political Culture, Public Opinion, and the Question of Objectivity

This is a study of the relationship between political culture and public opinion. Throughout, I argue that these two concepts shaped and influenced each other. I further argue that one of the reasons listeners turned to a particular radio station (and hence, the

⁷ Axel Schildt, "Hegemon der häuslichen Freizeit: Rundfunk in den 50er Jahren," in *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau: Die Westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre*, ed. Axel Schildt, Arnold Sywottek (Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nachf, 1993), 458-476.

political ideologies that station represented) was the level to which that station accurately presented news and information. It is therefore necessary to consider these concepts in more detail. My definition of “political culture” stems from two broad fields of scholarship. First, drawing on scholarship by historians such as George Mosse, Keith Michael Baker, and Lynn Hunt, I define political culture as the language, rituals, and symbols of political discourses.⁸ While these scholars have examined different time periods and countries, their work focuses on the transformative power of ideas and their role in shaping historical events. In this regard, they belong to a methodological tradition begun by Alexis de Tocqueville, who first noted that the development of revolutionary language and rhetoric during the French Revolution was a historically significant event unto itself.⁹ The field of German history has also seen the publication of a number of excellent works on political ideologies and culture. Over the past forty years, historians such as George Mosse, Fritz Stern, and Karl Dietrich Bracher have published important works examining the ideological origins of National Socialism.¹⁰ Historians such as Norbert Frei, Jeffrey Herf, Robert Moeller, and Anson Rabinbach have also paid close attention to the development of German political culture after the events of World War II. Much of this work has focused on the important role memory has played in politics in both Germanys, focusing on the intersection between events and how statesmen

⁸ For examples of this tradition, see H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: the Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), and Jerry Z. Muller, *The Mind and the Market: Capitalism in Modern European Thought* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, ed. Francois Furet and Francois Melonio, trans. Alan S. Kahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹⁰ George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: The Universal Library, 1964), Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and effects of National Socialism*, trans. Jean Steinberg (New York: Praeger Productions, 1970), and Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

remembered and confronted the German past. These works also address the influence of the Cold War upon German political culture¹¹

While the formulation of political language and rhetoric constitutes an important theme of this study, I am also interested in the impact and reception of the political ideologies transmitted by Berlin's radio stations upon listeners. Consequently, my examination of political culture also draws upon the work of political scientists such as Sidney Verba and Gabriel Almond.¹² For both of these scholars, the nature and character of political culture was linked to the level and character of political participation and political awareness. As noted before, radio broadcasting affords us an excellent opportunity to consider the intersection between both these approaches to political culture. The existence of broadcast transcripts, listener surveys, and listeners located in American and German archives allows historians to bring together and investigate these two interpretations. On the one hand, the broadcasts themselves allow us to see how journalists crafted political rhetoric and ideologies in their reports. On the other, the desire of both stations and governments to monitor the effectiveness of radio broadcasts allows us to use surveys and polls to assess the level of popular response amongst audiences to particular political ideologies and interpretations.

Both the United States and East Germany sought to use broadcast journalism as a means of building political consensus and public opinion. As the journalist Walter

¹¹Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration*, translated by Joel Golb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), Helmut Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte: Die nationalsozialistische Herrschaft in den Debatten des Deutschen Bundestages* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1999), Jan-Werner Müller, *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Catherine Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries: The German Communists and their Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹² Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

Lippmann noted in his study *Public Opinion*, the mass media plays a critical role in shaping and defining the stereotypes, symbols, and interpretations that build a public consensus.¹³ The dynamics of this phenomenon have been analyzed in further detail by the sociologist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, who noted that individuals' fear of isolation leads them to keep minority opinions private and affirm the majority opinion. The ensuing "spiral of silence" contributes to forming of mass consensus.¹⁴ Radio stations in both halves of Berlin operated under this assumption, utilizing rhetoric, imagery, and stereotypes to try and define the Cold War world. Each side of the radio war drew upon a distinct interpretive framework with which to analyze and explain major events. In East Germany, the master narrative of antifascism, developed by German Communists in the 1920s and 1930s, informed news broadcasting. GDR broadcasts cast the world into two antagonistic camps led by the Soviet Union and United States respectively: peaceful, progressive socialism and belligerent, imperialist capitalism. In the context of divided Berlin, East German broadcasters argued that the United States and the resurgent fascist West Germany were attempting to destroy the GDR from within. Thus, GDR news broadcasts were dominated by a siege mentality. In West Berlin, RIAS promoted the concept of anti-totalitarianism. The Marxist-Leninist elements of East German communism were subsumed beneath a totalitarian paradigm that downplayed distinctions between the GDR and Nazi Germany. Thus, just as East German radio claimed West Germany was the successor to the Third Reich, RIAS claimed the GDR was simply a renewal of Nazi totalitarianism. Berlin's radio stations participated in a broader process

¹³ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922).

¹⁴ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion—Our Social Skin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

pursued by organs of the mass media throughout Germany, by which they sought to conceptualize and define the defeat and division of Germany.¹⁵

As noted, the question of objectivity played a prominent role in how radio journalists on both sides of the Iron Curtain approached major events and how listeners subsequently responded. Furthermore, it strongly influenced listener choices and preferences. The term “objective” is a loaded one, and it carries with it a large number of connotations. In one sense, it refers to principles of empirical research, rational deduction, and impartiality developed during the scientific revolution, enlightenment, and nineteenth century.¹⁶ By the mid twentieth century, a growing number of intellectuals began to criticize these principles, questioning the principle that one could ever analyze and observe in an impartial, truly “objective” manner. Critics from radical movements such as National Socialism and Stalinist Communism alike characterized objectivity as a naïve vestige of liberalism and impossible to pursue.¹⁷ Following the Second World War, intellectuals from a variety of fields in the liberal arts and social sciences vigorously interrogated the limits of objectivity, questioning the individual’s ability to truly investigate and test hypotheses in a truly unbiased, neutral manner.¹⁸ For example, Peter

¹⁵ Jürgen Wilke, “Massenmedien und Vergangenheitsbewältigung,” in Jürgen Wilke ed., *Mediengeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), 633-671, Edgar Lersch, “Die Thematisierung des Nationalsozialismus im Rundfunk der Nachkriegszeit,” in *Rundfunk und Geschichte*, 29:1-2 (2003): 5-19, Christoph Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus: Die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit im ostdeutschen Hörfunk (1945-1953)* (Cologne: Böhlau 1999), Wolfgang Becker, Norbert Schöll, *In jenen Tagen... Wie der deutsche Nachkriegsfilm die Vergangenheit bewältigte* (Opladen: Lester and Budrich 1995), Knut Hickethier “Der Zweite Weltkrieg und der Holocaust im Fernsehen der Bundesrepublik der fünfziger und frühen sechziger Jahre,” in Michael Greven, Oliver von Wrochem ed. *Der Krieg in der Nachkriegszeit. Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Politik und Gesellschaft der Bundesrepublik* (Opladen: Lester and Budrich 2000), p. 93-112, and Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*.

¹⁶ Stephen J.A. Ward’s introduction to *The Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004) provides an excellent overview of the history of the objectivity idea. For an overview of the development of and challenges to nineteenth century positivism, see H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958).

¹⁷ Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The Age of Ideologies: A History of Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Ewald Osers (London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984)

¹⁸ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology o Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966), Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,

Novick characterized the objective writing of history as a “noble dream” and Hayden White argued that the utilization of literary tropes made a truly objective investigation of the past impossible.¹⁹

Journalists also developed professional and ethical standards that addressed the concept of objectivity. However, although journalists and newspapers had existed in Europe since the sixteenth century, it was not until the 1920s that North American reporters formulated a doctrine of journalistic objectivity.²⁰ In contrast to European journalists, who frequently expressed opinions in their reporting, American journalists considered objectivity fundamental to professional reporting in a democratic society. The mid-twentieth century ideal of objectivity was a strict and methodical set of principles. Journalists believed that a strict distinction needed to exist between opinion and news, thus requiring a high level of empirical research and investigation. Objective journalists preached restraint, systematic testing of sources, and balance.²¹ However, just as scholars began to question objectivity in studying the social sciences, many intellectuals and journalists began to question whether or not journalists could truly be objective. Was it possible to be truly objective? Were journalists not allowing their own judgments shape their reporting when they selected and edited stories? Journalists were political actors, not neutral observers. Consequently, by claiming that they were reporting objectively,

(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (London: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1972).

¹⁹ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The ‘Objectivity Question’ and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). For a critique of White and Novik, see Richard Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York: Norton, 1999).

²⁰ Michael Schudson, *Origin of the Ideal of Objectivity: Studies in the History of American Journalism and the American Law, 1830-1940* (New York: Gerald Publishing, 1990), Stephen J.A. Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics*, 214-219, Richard Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), David T.Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How ‘Objectivity’ Came to Define American Journalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

²¹ Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics*, 214-219.

reporters ignored the realities of corporate, commercial, and political pressures that existed in the journalism business.²²

Reporters in East and West Berlin all confronted these questions. However, the fact that these reporters operated in the context of Cold War Berlin often meant that the answers to these questions were inextricably linked to that conflict. Consequently, the issue for RIAS and the GDR broadcasters was not choosing between factual reporting *or* partisanship, but how to combine and balance the two in order to win the ideological struggle over Berlin and Germany. Tactical necessities and journalistic ethics coexisted side-by-side as journalists used commentaries to achieve political goals.

Historiography and Sources

This work contributes to a growing field of literature by scholars such as Inge Marszolek, Adelheid von Saldern, Christoph Classen, and Klaus Arnold that has sought to go beyond presenting the institutional and programming history of German radio stations, and instead focuses on the impact radio broadcasts have had on their political and social environment.²³ The last ten years has seen the publication of a number of excellent works examining the development of political broadcasting and its relationship to political culture in Germany. Historians such as Christoph Classen, Thomas Lindenberger, Ingrid Pietrzynski, and Bernd Stöver have all made important

²²Ibid., 13-14.

²³ Inge Marszolek and Adelheid von Saldern, *Radiozeiten: Herrschaft, Alltag, Gesellschaft, 1924-1960* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1990), Klaus Arnold and Christoph Classen, *Zwischen Pop und Propaganda: Radio in der DDR* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2004), Christoph Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus: Die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit im ostdeutschen Hörfunk (1945-1953)* (Cologne: Böhlau 1999).

contributions examining the ideological and institutional developments of radio broadcasting in Germany after World War II.²⁴

The work on radio in Berlin is diverse, although there has yet to be a work examining journalistic practices at all three of the city's major stations during the Cold War era. The earliest complete study to focus on RIAS is a dissertation from 1961 by Donald Roger Browne. While an extensive survey, thoroughly examining many of RIAS's programs and its organizations, it is not a critical work.²⁵ There is also an interesting, illustrated general history by former RIAS journalist Herbert Kundler that, while comprehensive, is not a scholarly monograph.²⁶ Bryan van Sweringen's 1995 study of the RIAS cabaret performer Gunter Neumann is one of the first critical studies of the station. However, its focus on Neumann means that most of it is devoted to cultural programming, with little on RIAS's journalistic practices.²⁷ Recently, three scholarly works have been published exploring stations based in Berlin. The first, a study by Maral Herbst, examines the institutional development and programming of Berliner Rundfunk and Sender Freies Berlin.²⁸ Schanett Riller has produced an excellent study of the Eisenhower administration's psychological warfare programs against the Soviets,

²⁴ See essays by all four of these scholars in Arnold and Classen, *Zwischen Pop und Propaganda*. See as well Michael Meyen, *Hauptsache Unterhaltung: Mediennutzung und Medienbewertung in Deutschland in den 50er Jahren* (Lit Verlag: Münster, 2001), Christoph Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, Ingrid Pietrzynski, "Der Rundfunk ist die Stimme der Republik...." *Bertolt Brecht und der Rundfunk der DDR 1949-1956* (Berlin: Trafo Verlag, 2003), Adelheid von Saldern and Inge MarBolek, ed. *Zuhören und Gehörtwerden II: Radio in der DDR der fünfziger Jahre Zwischen Lenkung und Ablenkung* (Tübingen: Ed. Diskord, 1998), Peter von Rüden and Hans-Ulrich Wagner ed., *Die Geschichte des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2005), Axel Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten. Freizeit, Massenmedien und „Zeitgeist“ in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre* (Hamburg: Christians 1995).

²⁵ Donald Roger Browne, *The History and Programming Policies of RIAS: Radio in the American Sector (of Berlin)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1961). See also D.G. White, *U.S. Military Government in Germany: Radio Reorientation*, (Karlsruhe: Historical Division European Command, 1950).

²⁶ Herbert Kundler, *RIAS Berlin: Eine Radio-Station in einer geteilten Stadt: Programme und Menschen—Text, Bilder, Dokumente* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1994).

²⁷ Bryan van Sweringen, *Kabarettist an der Front des Kalten Krieges: Günter Neumann und das politische Kabarett in der Programmgestaltung des RIAS 1948-1968* (Passau: Wissenschaftsverlag Rothe, 1995)

²⁸ Maral Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb: Der deutsche Rundfunk in Berlin zwischen Staatsgründung und Mauerbau* (Berlin: Vista Verlag, 2001).

focusing on RIAS's political broadcasts.²⁹ Most recently, Petra Galle has published a thoroughly researched study of the institutional development of RIAS and Berliner Rundfunk from 1945-1949.³⁰ Along with these works, there have also been a number of excellent essays examining both RIAS and the GDR's broadcasters by Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Markus Wackett, Christian Ostermann, and Berndt Stöver.³¹

There is also a large historiography that has explored how each side of the Cold War conflict utilized the mass media for political goals by scholars such as Kenneth Osgood, Walter Hixon, and Volker Berghahn.³² Most of these are works of diplomatic history and have focused on US efforts to use radio as a means of shaping politics in Europe and confronting the Soviet Union. Focusing on Germany, there has also been a number of works examining the role of US media institutions in Germany, with most focusing on the occupation period from 1945-1949 and on the issue of democratisation.³³

The source base for my dissertation is diverse and extensive and includes the files of the radio stations themselves, files of the US, West German, and East German

²⁹ Schanett Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit: Die US-amerikanische Informationspolitik gegenüber der DDR vor 1953 bis 1963* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2004).

³⁰ Petra Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk: Die Entwicklung ihrer Profile in Programm, Personal und Organisation vor dem Hintergrund des beginnenden Kalten Krieges* (Berlin: Lit, 2003).

³¹ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Vor dem Vorhang: Das geistige Berlin, 1945-1948* (Munich: Hanser, 1995), Markus Wackett, " 'Wir sprechen zur Zone,' Die politischen Sendungen des RIAS in der Vorgeschichte der Juni-Erhebung 1953," *Deutschlandarchiv* 26-9 (1993): 1035-1048, Christian F. Ostermann, "Die Beste Chance für ein Rollback? Amerikanische Politik und der 17. Juni 1953," in Christoph Kleßmann and Bernd Stöver ed., *1953-Krisenjahr des Kalten Krieges in Europa* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999) 115-139, Bernd Stöver, "Radio mit kalkuliertem Risiko: Der RIAS als US-Sender für die DDR 1946-1961," in *Zwischen Pop und Propaganda: Radio in der DDR* ed. Klaus Arnold and Christoph Classen (Berlin: C.H. Links Verlag, 2004), 209-228, Ingrid Pietryzynski, "Eine Republikpartei schule, noch dazu eine schlechte...: Der 17. Juni 1953, der DDR-Rundfunk, und ein Memorandum von Herbert Gessner und Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler," *Rundfunk und Geschichte*, no. 1-2, (2003): 20-37.

³² Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), Walter L. Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), Gary D. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: The BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1956-1964* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), Schanett Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit: Die US-amerikanische Informationspolitik gegenüber der DDR vor 1953 bis 1963* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2004), Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2000), Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

³³ Hartenian, *Controlling Information in U.S. Occupied Germany*, Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible*, Frei, *Amerikanische Lizenzpolitik und deutsche Pressetradition*, Tent, *Mission on the Rhine*.

governments, the documents of the East German Ministry for State Security, the files of the Socialist Unity Party, and the personal papers of prominent individuals such as RIAS journalists Egon Bahr and Victor Klages, SFB commentator Richard Löwenthal, and RIAS's director Gordon Ewing. The stations themselves have left behind substantial, if uneven archival resources currently housed at the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv in Babelsberg. The largest sources for news broadcasts are editorial commentary manuscripts. Running between five to ten minutes, these usually followed news broadcasts and focused on a particular topic or theme. These sources are important due to the fact that we have substantial collections of them from all of the stations examined in this study. Along with these manuscripts, I have also examined internal memos, meeting minutes, and news guidelines from these same collections. Within the files of the GDR's radio stations are the documents from the GDR's radio schools in Grünau and Weimar. Founded in the early 1950s, the GDR created these schools to train journalists for a socialist society. The lesson plans, examinations, student meeting minutes, and applications are a valuable means for investigation the type of reporter the GDR wanted to work for its broadcasters. Another valuable source, found in both the files of the GDR stations and RIAS are letters sent from listeners to the stations. While neither representative nor comprehensive, the letters nevertheless give us a picture of how individuals perceived the stations they were listening to and what kind of impact these broadcasts had.³⁴ I also draw upon files from the archive of RIAS's successor station, Deutschlandradio Kultur in Berlin. While most of RIAS's documents are now housed at

³⁴ The DRA has published many of its finding aids. See Petra Galle and Axel Schuster, *Archiv und Sammlungsgut des RIAS Berlin: Ein Findbuch zum Bestand im Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2000), Ingrid Pietrzynski, *Das Schriftgut des DDR-Hörfunks: Eine Bestandsübersicht* (Potsdam-Babelsberg: Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, 2002), and Alexander Greguletz, *Inventar der Manuskriptbestände des Berliner Rundfunks (1945-1950)* (Potsdam-Babelsberg: Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, 1999).

the DRA, Deutschlandradio nevertheless has a diverse collection of archival material, ranging from official reports, press clippings, and sound documents. The sound archive is especially helpful, in that it afforded me the opportunity to hear many of the RIAS broadcasts that I discuss in this dissertation.

Along with the files of the radio stations themselves, I also draw upon the archival resources of the various agencies responsible for broadcasting in the two Germanys. The files of the State Radio Committee of the GDR at the Bundesarchiv in Berlin were a very helpful means for examining policy decisions regarding broadcasting as well as investigating how the GDR tried to ascertain listener attitudes and preferences. Also at the Bundesarchiv are the files of the Socialist Unity Party, the ruling communist party of East Germany. The files of the SED's Department for Agitation provide further insight in programming concerns and the relationship between news broadcasting and ideology. Both the DRA and Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin also house numerous propaganda posters, cartoons, and pamphlets aimed at discouraging listening to RIAS. These documents allowed me to explore the GDR's elaborate anti-RIAS campaign. Another valuable source from the GDR that addresses this topic are the files of the Ministry for State Security, or *Stasi*. These files, which include operation reports and reports on RIAS broadcasts provided helpful insight into the level to which the GDR feared RIAS and its effect upon the East German population. The dissertation also draws on the files of the West German Ministry for All-German affairs housed in Koblenz.

Between 1946 and 1953, RIAS was under the control of three different US government agencies: The US Military Government in Germany (OMGUS) from 1946-1949, the High Commission for Germany from 1949 to 1953 (HICOG), and the United

States Information Agency/Service (USIA) from 1953 to the station's dissolution in 1994.³⁵ The dissertation draws from the files of all of these agencies. These files, housed at the National Archives in College Park, include documents related to RIAS and radio broadcasting throughout Germany. The OMGUS files also include a large collection of letters written to RIAS during the Berlin blockade and airlift, many of which stem from what was then the Soviet Zone of Occupation (SBZ). Along with the files of these specific organizations, the study also draws upon the files of the United States Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency.

The historian of Berlin radio is fortunate to have a number of valuable personal collections of individuals attached to various radio stations in the city. The dissertation draws from all of these collections. The Archiv der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Bonn houses the files of RIAS reporter and Bonn correspondent Egon Bahr and of SFB's freelance commentator Richard Löwenthal. In Berlin, the city's Landesarchiv contains the personal files of RIAS reporter Victor Klages. All of these collections include personal correspondence and broadcast manuscripts. Also important are the personal papers of RIAS Director Gordon Ewing. An American official, Ewing served as director from 1953-1957. Thus, he was heavily involved with the station during events such as June 17 uprising. His papers, which include outlines of programming goals, listener reports, and personal correspondence, provide a great deal of insight into the inner workings of the station. Along with these archival sources, I also draw on a number of valuable published works for primary material. Most valuable was Manfred Rexin's collection of personal histories of RIAS journalists, radio personalities,

³⁵ The United States Information Agency was called the United States Information Service overseas, or USIS. See Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 89. The USIA and USIS were one and the same, and when referring to the organization throughout I use "USIA" unless referencing a source that specifically calls the organization "USIS."

and editors.³⁶ The memoirs of RIAS commentator Egon Bahr also provided helpful insights into the political atmosphere of RIAS during the early 1950s.³⁷

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter One focuses on the founding of Berliner Rundfunk by German Communists, and examines the station's reports on the Nuremberg Trials and the founding of the Socialist Unity Party. Chapter Two considers the founding of RIAS and how stations in East and West Berlin reported on the Berlin blockade and airlift. During this period, Germany remained under allied occupation. Thus, the political challenges were markedly different than they were after 1949, with the founding of two sovereign German states. 1949 marks an important turning point in other ways. That year, authority over RIAS was transferred from the US Military Government to the US Department of State as the US High Commission for Germany replaced OMGUS. In East Germany, the leadership of Berliner Rundfunk was purged as the communist Socialist Unity Party quickly began asserting control over media operations. Thus, in many ways both radio stations faced new challenges and a new status quo during the 1950s.

Chapter Three considers the development of models for news broadcasting at both RIAS and the stations of the GDR. It also examines the symbolic significance of Sender Freie Berlin and its role within the Berlin media landscape. Chapter Four considers the June 17, 1953 uprising. Radio broadcasts, especially from RIAS, played a decisive role in the uprising and a focused examination of the event is an illuminating opportunity to examine the impact of broadcasting on political actions and attitudes. Chapter Five moves away from radio broadcasting and turns to the East German propaganda campaign

³⁶ Manfred Rexin, *Radio-Reminiszenzen: Erinnerungen an RIAS Berlin* (Berlin: Medienanstalt Berlin-Brandenburg MABB, 2002).

³⁷ Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (Karl Blessing Verlag, Munich, 1996).

against RIAS, examining the various efforts taken by the GDR to stop its population from listening to the US sponsored broadcaster. Chapter Six begins by examining how GDR stations and RIAS reported on the major events of 1956: Khrushchev's Secret Speech, the Hungarian Uprising, and the Suez Crisis, and closes by analysing broadcasts during the 1961 Berlin Crisis and the construction of the Berlin Wall.

Chapter One: Laying an Antifascist Foundation: Berliner Rundfunk and the Reestablishment of Broadcasting in Berlin After World War II

On May 2, 1945, just six days before VE Day, soldiers of the Red Army occupied Berlin's Haus des Rundfunks, the center of the Third Reich's broadcast network and the home of Reichssender Berlin.¹ A little over a week later, on May 13, Berliner Rundfunk began operations with an hour long broadcast that included the German surrender announcement and the first order of the Soviet City Commandant of Berlin. Berliner Rundfunk was soon broadcasting eighteen hours a day, presenting a variety of news, music, and radio plays. In a diary entry for June 17, 1945, Victor Klemperer noted, "During every programme, dozens of times a day, Radio Berlin announced the time, and that is a blessing."² It is likely that many listeners shared Klemperer's appreciation for such a simple service during the confused and chaotic months immediately after World War II.

During its first years of operation, Berliner Rundfunk pursued a variety of goals, ranging from broadcasting the orders of the Soviet Military Administration to instilling calm by broadcasting music. At the same time, the station also pursued overtly political goals and attempted to lay the foundations for a future antifascist and democratic German state. Reporters and commentators at Berlin Rundfunk actively promoted the policies of the Soviet occupying authorities: the purging of fascism from German society and the creation of a peaceful Germany based on what was claimed to be a democratic, antifascist foundation. Staffed by communists and socialists who had spent the Third Reich in exile

¹ Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 37.

² Klemperer, *The Diaries of Victor Klemperer: 1945-59*, 1.

or in concentration camps, the station broadcast a consistent presentation of the world-views developed by German communists over the past three decades.

This chapter is about Berliner Rundfunk's attempts to shape German political culture during the first two years of the occupation. The reporters and administrators at Berliner Rundfunk were guided by the belief that radio could be deployed to reeducate the German people and remove the harmful and destructive influences of fascism and imperialism from the German national mentality. Throughout Berliner Rundfunk's broadcasts, a coherent worldview dominated news reports. This worldview, which interpreted Nazism as a brutalized expression of deep seeded elements in German society, such as imperialism, militarism, the influence of high finance and monopoly capitalism, guided how journalists presented the major news stories of the first two years of the occupation, such as the Nuremberg Trials and the creation of the Socialist Unity Party.

The Soviet Military Administration, Group Ulbricht, and the Reconstruction of Broadcasting in Berlin

Before the end of World War II, the allied powers agreed that upon the German surrender, the German Reich would be dissolved and divided into four zones of occupation to be administered respectively by the four major Allied powers: the United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France. It was also agreed that although Berlin lay within the Soviet Zone of Occupation, its symbolic nature as the capital of Germany necessitated that it be jointly administered. Thus, Berlin was divided into four sectors of

occupation between the four allies. Although each allied power had full control over its respective zone, an Allied Control Council was created to govern Germany as a whole. However, since decisions needed to be unanimous, its authority was limited.³

Before the German surrender, the Soviets had taken steps to strengthen their authority and position within Berlin and their occupation zone, flying in loyal German communists who had spent the war years in the Soviet Union. The Soviet authorities placed the members of this group, led by Walter Ulbricht, in most of the important local and municipal administrative posts in the Soviet sectors of Berlin and the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ).⁴ Among these was Berlin's radio station, which Ulbricht placed under the authority of his thirty-four year old colleague and fellow exile, Hans Mahle.

Initially, the Allied powers planned to pursue a unified policy with regards to the renewal of radio broadcasting. However, there was little discussion between the various powers with regards to what the nature and character of radio broadcasting would be in postwar Germany.⁵ In contrast to their respective policies with regards to newspaper licensing, the Allies were unsure of how to proceed. They also pursued distinct approaches to radio in their respective zones, with the Soviets and United States reestablishing local stations and the British creating a large Northwest German radio for its entire occupation zone.⁶

In April 1945, the leaders of the German Communist Party (KPD) exiled to Moscow, along with members of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) devised a number

³ Henry Ashby Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), in particular Chapter One, 1-32.

⁴ David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Allen Lane, 2001). For Soviet policies in their own zone, see Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995) and David Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Occupied Germany* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁵ Arnulf Kutsch, "Rundfunk unter alliierter Besatzung," in *Mediengeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Jürgen Wilke (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), 60-61.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 63-66-

of measures and goals they intended to guide radio and newspaper reporting in postwar Germany. These goals were wide ranging, and included reasserting order, promoting support for the Red Army and Soviet Union, and laying the groundwork for a new, antifascist and democratic Germany. Interestingly, many of these aims focused on active engagement with the German population. The guidelines' drafters intended radio reports to educate listeners that the German population were the root cause of the National Socialism and that the population should now hate National Socialism, Prussian militarism, and racism. The KPD leadership believed that postwar news reports could convince listeners that the eradication of Nazism was in the best interests of the German nation. They also hoped radio would be able to not only educate, but mobilize the German population into actively supporting the Soviet Union's policies and the occupation of the Red Army. While none of these aims declared that radio in the SBZ should promote the creation of a socialist Germany, it was clear that they were intended to cultivate friendship and support for the Soviet Military Administration (SMA). The overriding goal was the establishment of a broad, antifascist coalition that united all of those political movements that were opposed to the Nazis.⁷

A number of factors influenced the shaping of the guidelines. First, there was the practical necessity of establishing Soviet authority over the SBZ. Secondly, however, was the pervading influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the ideas about the need to use the mass media as a means for agitation and mobilization developed by Vladimir Lenin.⁸ Propaganda and agitation were critical means for shaping political culture and political mentalities. Lenin and adherents to his theories saw in the organs of the mass

⁷ "Richtlinien" cited in Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 43-44.

⁸ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 45.

media a critical tool that could help in this mobilization. Consequently, despite pretensions of creating a broad popular front, both the Soviets and German communists (and with them their ideological preconceptions) heavily influenced the building of Berliner Rundfunk. Although most of the station personnel were not members of the KPD or its successor, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), most of its chief officials and journalists were committed communists.⁹ For all of them, the rise of the Nazis had definitively shaped their worldviews. Leading the station, and radio operations throughout the Eastern Zone, was Hans Mahle. Born in Hamburg in 1911, Hans Mahle's upbringing was dominated by the German socialist movement. His father was a member of the Social Democratic Party and joined the Spartacus League in 1918. During the early 1930s, Mahle traveled to Moscow and worked underground in Germany after Hitler's assumption of power in 1933. In 1936 he officially immigrated to the Soviet Union. While he was in Moscow, Germany invaded the Soviet Union and Mahle became actively involved in the counter-propaganda operations of the Soviet government. He worked both in youth radio and to reeducate German Prisoners of War. In 1943, he helped found the Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland (National Committee for a Free Germany, or NKFD), and worked for the editorial staff of the NKFD's radio station, "Freies Deutschland."¹⁰

Mahle faced a considerable number of challenges. The station house in Berlin's Charlottenburg District lacked a working transmitter.¹¹ Most of the available personnel

⁹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁰ Katharina Riege, *Einem Traum verpflichtet: Hans Mahle—eine Biographie*, (Hamburg: VSA, 2003). See also an interview with Mahle in "Das Gespräch mit Hans Mahle," in Sabine Herring and Hans Georg Lützenkirchen, *Anders Werden: Die Anfänge der politischen Erwachsenenbildung in der DDR* (Berlin: Overall, 1995).

¹¹ The Haus des Rundfunks is located in the district of Charlottenburg, located in the British occupation sector. In 1945, the nearest operable transmitter was in Tegel, a district to the northwest in the French sector. A radio facility would not actually be built in the Soviet sector until the late 1940s. That the Soviet backed, German communist radio

with experience in radio broadcasting had also worked for the old Reichssender, compromising denazification efforts. While Mahle was able to find adequate equipment to recommence broadcasts, the personnel issue was more difficult to solve. Even those employees who were not members of the Nazi Party were politically compromised due to the critical importance radio had played in the Third Reich's propaganda operations. Almost immediately, communists were installed in most of the leading positions. However, many lower level workers and editors in cultural and artistic programming who had worked for the Reichssender remained.¹²

The desire to recommence broadcasting as rapidly as possible led the Soviets and their German clients to sanction a flexible personnel policy regarding former employees of the Nazi run Reichssender Berlin, a division of the Reichsrundfunk.¹³ Thus, within weeks of producing the media guidelines, Soviet and German Communist authorities were altering their position that the German people were responsible for the crimes of the Third Reich. Instead, SMA officials placed renewed emphasis on the blaming the Nazi leadership.¹⁴ SMA officials and German Communists stressed that the Nazi regime was a consequence of the larger structural forces inherent to capitalism and that the German people complicit in the National Socialist regime could be rehabilitated along Marxist-Leninist lines. Thus, Mahle and the Soviet military authorities deemed the presence of large numbers of former Reichssender employees acceptable.¹⁵ In June and July, 1945, 110 of the station's 600 employees were dismissed from Berliner Rundfunk due to ties to National Socialism. Thus, the majority of the station's employees had worked for the

station operated from the middle of the British sector of Berlin caused considerable difficulties for both its employers and the Western Allies.

¹² Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 132.

¹³ Christoph Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 92.

¹⁴ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

Nazi's Reichsrundfunk.¹⁶ Since their responsibilities had not been overtly political in nature, SMA authorities allowed individuals in charge of artistic programming, such as childrens' programming director Ilse Obrig, to continue broadcasting. Having worked in radio since the days of the Weimar Republic, Obrig was a successful children's author and inspected children's literature for the National Socialist regime during the 1930s. While she would eventually be brought before a denazification commission by Soviet authorities, she was cleared of any wrong doing and allowed to remain at her position in Berliner Rundfunk, where she remained until 1950, leaving to work for West Berlin's radio stations, RIAS and SFB.¹⁷

Despite the prevalence of former Reichsrundfunk personnel, German Communists occupied all politically sensitive positions relating to news and politics. Thus, the first journalists to work for Berliner Rundfunk were all men whose worldviews had been shaped by the rise of Nazism and the recent war between Germany and the Soviet Union. The first reporters and commentators working for Berliner Rundfunk can be divided into three groups: individuals who had spent the Nazi years living in exile in the Soviet Union, individuals who had spent those years in states other than the Soviet Union, and individuals who were incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps. Belonging to the first group of exiles was Markus Wolf. Comparatively younger in comparison to his coworkers, Wolf had spent the Nazi era with his family in exile, living first in Switzerland, and then in the Soviet Union beginning in 1934. Only eleven when he arrived in Moscow, he was educated within the Soviet schooling system. Beginning in 1943, Wolf worked as a commentator and editor at "Deutschen Volkssender" in Moscow,

¹⁶ Ibid., 403.

¹⁷ Ibid., 133-35.

and would return to Berlin with Ulbricht. His Soviet citizenship and close relationship with Vladimir Mulin, the Soviet radio chief in the SBZ, gave him considerable advantages. He worked both as an employee of Berliner Rundfunk and the Soviet Military Administration, serving as a radio commentator from 1945 until 1949. As a Soviet passport holder, he was also allowed to attend the Nuremberg Trials as a reporter; a privilege not permitted most German journalists.¹⁸ Afterwards he would advance in the GDR hierarchy and become the head of the Ministry for State Security's espionage division.

Belonging to the second group were communist journalists such as Max Seydewitz and Heinz Schmidt. A one time member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Seydewitz became associated with the KPD in 1934 and worked for the exile anti-Nazi press in Czechoslovakia. He eventually moved to Norway and Sweden during the Nazi period.¹⁹ He returned to Germany in 1946 and worked for SED party organs before succeeding the recently promoted Hans Mahle as Berliner Rundfunk Intendant. He served as Intendant for just a year, and was replaced by Heinz Schmidt. A social democrat turned communist, Schmidt had spent the Nazi period in Britain, where he worked for the Free German Youth journal *Freie Tribüne*. Upon returning to Germany in 1946, he became Chief Editor and then Intendant of Berliner Rundfunk, serving until 1949.²⁰

Several Berliner Rundfunk journalists had lived through the war years in prison. One of these was Arthur Mannbar. Born in 1913, he spent his youth involved with

¹⁸ Markus Wolf, *Man Without a Face The Autobiography of Communism's Greatest Spymaster* (New York: Times Books, 1997). See also Large, *Berlin*, 433, and Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 224.

¹⁹ Christoph Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus* 378.

²⁰ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 158.

various German communist organizations before joining the KPD in 1933. He fled Nazi Germany in 1935, eventually arriving in the Soviet Union where he attended the Lenin school in Moscow from 1935-1937. Between 1938 and 1940 he worked as a resistance fighter before being captured in Denmark in 1940 by the Gestapo. He spent the remainder of the war in prison. Although expelled from the SED in 1947 due to the suspicion that he had collaborated with the Gestapo, he was rehabilitated in 1956. He continued to work for various GDR radio stations and news services until 1977.²¹

Another Berliner Rundfunk reporter who had spent the war years in prison was Alfred DÜchrow. Born in 1905, DÜchrow joined the KPD in 1924. A teacher and journalist, DÜchrow spent ten years of his life in Nazi concentration camps. Upon being liberated from Dachau by US forces in 1945, DÜchrow immediately began working as an editor and commentator for numerous Berliner Rundfunk political programs. He would continue to work as a correspondent for various GDR news organs until 1969.²²

As can be seen, the original staff of Berliner Rundfunk came from a variety of backgrounds, yet their biographies all shared fundamental elements. Some had spent the Nazi period in exile in Moscow, where they were able to cultivate a close relationship with Soviet authorities. Many had spent the war years honing their craft as antifascist journalists. Others still spent the Nazi period imprisoned in concentration camps. Most importantly, all had experienced persecution due to the rise of the Nazis. They were all men of the German left whose formative experiences had been during the upheavals of the Weimar Republic and the persecution of the Nazi era. As Catherine Epstein has shown in her biographical study of the German Communists who founded the German

²¹ Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 375.

²² Ibid., 371.

Democratic Republic, they were hardened men driven by a clear worldview that divided the world between fascists and antifascists.²³ Their experiences in exile and in the camps led them to pursue an aggressive policy against those forces they perceived to be the source of Germany's downfall: capitalist imperialism, militarism, and the disunity of the German political left.

Norman Naimark has shown that the Soviet Union's policy towards the occupation Germany was uncoordinated, inconsistent, and lacking in any kind of premeditated planning.²⁴ The improvised character of Berliner Rundfunk's creation, described by Mahle as "chaotic,"²⁵ reflects the ad hoc nature of the Soviet military administration. While the Soviets shared a number of common goals with the Western Allies, including denazification, reeducation, and demilitarization, there was little agreement on what kind of economic and political system would govern the new Germany. For example, disagreements existed within the SMA and KPD about whether or not the Soviets should support the creation of a bourgeois, democratic regime as a means of setting the stage for an inevitable socialist revolution, or whether the Soviets should embark upon a more radical path and create a Communist regime in the SBZ, as advocated by individuals like Ulbricht. As scholars have shown, even Stalin himself was less than enthusiastic about transforming the SBZ into a Communist satellite, preferring to leave his options open for an accommodation with the Western Allies.²⁶ These

²³ Catherine Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries: The German Communists and their Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

²⁴ Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 9-11

²⁵ "Das Gespräch mit Hans Mahle," 31.

²⁶ Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Occupied Germany*, 3-69. For an exploration of the tensions between the Soviet leadership and the SMA regarding the creation of a socialist Germany, see Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), John Lewis Gaddis, "The German Question," in *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 113-151, Naimark, "The Tiul'panov Question and Soviet Policy-making in the Zone," in *The Russians in*

tensions were apparent throughout the various organizations created by the SMA to monitor censorship, the dissemination of information, and broadcasting. On August 18, 1945 the SMA's political advisor, Vladimir Semyonov, created the Sector for Propaganda and Censorship.²⁷ In December 1945 the SMA's Propaganda Department launched a department for radio propaganda. In between, in November 1945, the SMA had also created a radio division in the German Central Administration for Peoples' Education (DVV). Unlike the first two organizations, the DVV was German run, and the Soviets appointed Hans Mahle head of the DVV's radio operations. Nevertheless, the SMA retained oversight and censorship control over all information in the SBZ.²⁸

One should not interpret the lack of clear Soviet goals as an indication that Berliner Rundfunk's reporters were free to select their stories and how they reported. Many East German journalists, such as Intendant Hans Mahle, have thought back favorably about their early days at Berliner Rundfunk and have spoken of the freedom afforded its reporters.²⁹ Although Berliner Rundfunk enjoyed relative freedom during its first months of broadcasting, the SMA quickly established censorship bodies designed to oversee and monitor the station's broadcasts. Soviet censors had complete control over what Berliner Rundfunk could broadcast. For example, Mahle and his reporters were not permitted to broadcast reports about the Soviet Union unless requested to do so by the SMA.³⁰ Even the few moments where the SMA granted Berliner Rundfunk relative freedom to report, such as in Marcus Wolf's Nuremberg Trial reports, Wolf ultimately

Germany, 318-352 and Wilfried Loth, *Stalins ungeliebtes Kind. Warum Moskau die DDR nicht wollte* (Munich: Aktualisierte Taschenbuchausgabe, 1998).

²⁷ Gunter Holzweißig, *Die Schärfste Waffe der Partei: Eine Mediengeschichte der DDR* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002), 71.

²⁸ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 83.

²⁹ Workshop, December 17, 1991, "Rundfunkneubeginn 1945," *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit...40 Jahre DDR-Medien: Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Rundfunk-Museums 25. August 1993 bis 31. Januar 1994*, edited by Heide Riedel (Berlin: Vistas, 1994).

³⁰ Holzweißig, *Die Schärfste Waffe der Partei*, 73.

had to have his broadcasts cleared by the SED leadership.³¹ Furthermore, although the principle wire service for SBZ broadcast and print news, the Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst (General German News Service, or ADN) was a limited liability organization dedicated to the creation of a broad, nonpartisan antifascist coalition, it was nevertheless a creation of Tiul'panov's Information and Propaganda Department and dominated by the Soviets and members of the SED.³²

Critically, there were a variety of opinions and attitudes regarding Germany's postwar future both within the SMA and amongst the SED. Despite being a friend of Ulbricht and member of his Moscow group, Hans Mahle pursued the Soviet's public party line that broadcasters needed to pursue a more moderate approach that was open to the creation of an antifascist consensus open to cooperation with non-Marxist parties such as the Liberal Democrats and Christian Democrats.³³ At the same time, however, both Walter Ulbricht and the Soviet Information Chief in the SBZ, Sergei Tiul'panov, favored an approach supporting Soviet policies in the SBZ and openly favoring German communists at the expense of both other political parties and of inter-allied governance of the German Occupation Zones.³⁴ This tension accounts for many contradictions that existed throughout Berliner Rundfunk's political broadcasts during the occupation period, especially between the end of the war and the breakdown of inter-allied cooperation in 1947. On the one hand, Berliner Rundfunk correspondents promoted broad goals such as democratization, antifascism, and cooperation with the Western Allies. On the other

³¹ Ibid., 83.

³² Ibid., 32.

³³ Galle, "Ein 'Moskau-Kader' als Sicherheitsrisiko: Hans Mahles Aufstieg und Fall als Generalintendant des Rundfunks in der SBZ/DDR," in Claus-Dieter Krohn and Axel Schildt ed. *Zwischen den Stühlen? Remigranten und Remigration in der deutschen Medienöffentlichkeit der Nachkriegszeit*, (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2002), 366-396. For the ideological foundations of the antifascist popular front, see Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft in der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), 29-40.

³⁴ Naimark, "The Tiul'panov Question and Soviet Policy-making in the Zone," 318-352. For Tiul'panov's relationship with Walter Ulbricht, see Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 38.

hand, when reporting controversial moments such as the creation of the Socialist Unity Party and the announcement of the Nuremberg Trial verdicts in 1946, the station's reporters came down decidedly on the side of the Soviet authorities and promoted a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of events.

In 1946, the SMA placed broadcasting under the control of the newly created German Central Administration for Peoples' Education (DVV) headed by Paul Wandel, a journalist and member of the Ulbricht group. The SMA intended the DVV to oversee all areas of education within the SBZ, of which broadcasting was a critical component.³⁵ Among the DVV's other responsibilities was also censoring all broadcasts and publications.³⁶ Despite the bureaucratic reorganization, Mahle was responsible for all radio operations in the SBZ, holding the title of General Intendant for Radio (though broadcasts remained subject to SMA censors).³⁷ The staff of Berliner Rundfunk worked relatively well with the Soviet control officers. The Soviet officers spoke excellent German and had a strong backing in propaganda techniques.

In charge of propaganda in the Soviet Zone was Colonel Sergei Tiul'panov, a Communist Party official in charge of counterpropaganda during World War II. Tiul'panov was responsible for recruiting Germans for the Committee for a Free Germany, and thus had a close working relationship with the communists who comprised Group Ulbricht. He played a critical role in many of the political events in the SBZ during the occupation, including the creation of the Socialist Unity Party and strengthening the power of Ulbricht and his allies.³⁸ Tiul'panov's radio chief was

³⁵ Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Occupied Germany*, 435.

³⁶ Ibid., 88-102.

³⁷ Maral Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 42-43.

³⁸ Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 318-352.

Vladimir Mulin, an amiable man who got along with both the Soviets and Western Allies so well that US observers at one point expressed surprise that he had not been recalled.³⁹ Before the war, Mulin had been in charge of Radio Moscow's foreign broadcasts, and had worked as a correspondent with the Red Army during the war. Although he was amiable and well liked by the allied leaders, he was also, in the words of Information Officials in the US occupation authority, a "good dialectician" who had "no difficulty rationalizing the Soviet position on any issue."⁴⁰ He fully embraced the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, and did not perceive the broadcasts of Berliner Rundfunk and the other Soviet zone stations as anything but the truth.⁴¹

Beginning on May 20, 1945 Berliner Rundfunk presented about nineteen hours of broadcasting a day. Of this, roughly forty percent was devoted to spoken word broadcasting (as opposed to music).⁴² For the next year, Berliner Rundfunk would be the only large-scale broadcaster in the former German capital. During this critical period the surviving leaders of the Nazi Party would be tried at the Nuremberg War Crime trials. From the end of 1945 and throughout 1946, Berliner Rundfunk reporters such as Marcus Wolf and Arthur Mannbar were able to use the trials as a means of exposing the crimes of the Nazi regime, exploring the nature of German fascism, and promoting the Soviet and German Communist vision for a postwar, antifascist and democratic Germany.

³⁹ US Information Control Division Political Affairs, *Information on SMA Radio Chief*, April 26, 1948, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (NARA), Record Group 260: Office of the Military Government, United States (RG 260) (OMGUS), Records of the Information Control Division (ICD), Radio Branch, Stack 390, Row 42, Compartment 21, Shelf 3, (390/42/21/3) Box 303.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 88-89.

⁴² Classen, *Faschismus und antifaschismus*, 105.

The Nuremberg Trial Reports

The political culture of the future German Democratic Republic was shaped by a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the world.⁴³ It cast a world divided between antifascist, progressive socialism on the one hand, and fascism, reaction, and finance capital on the other. Thus, German Communists analyzed National Socialism as an outgrowth of Germany's long traditions of imperialism, militarism, and the unmitigated influence of large-scale finance and capitalism on German society.⁴⁴ Communism was the ideology of progress and antifascism, its importance and historical role proven by the Soviet Union's recent victory of Nazi Germany.

The important themes of this narrative dominated the broadcasts of Berliner Rundfunk, especially when it came to issues such as the Nazi past and the future for Germany. In the very first weeks of Berliner Rundfunk's broadcasts, it did not evade such critical issues as the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen Concentration Camps, Germany's war guilt, and the need to bring war criminals to justice.⁴⁵

Berliner Rundfunk's chief correspondents in Nuremberg, Markus Wolf and Arthur Mannbar, were amongst the very few Germans permitted into the courtroom itself and allowed to broadcast directly from the proceedings. Berliner Rundfunk featured frequent, detailed analyses of the day's proceedings, the nature of the trial, and the lessons that their listeners needed to draw from the events. In Berlin, other Berliner

⁴³ Both the origin and importance of these master narratives are described in Herf, *Divided Memory*. See as well Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft*.

⁴⁴ For the origins and development of Antifascism as an ideology, see Francois Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), especially Chapters Seven and Eight.

⁴⁵ Christine Bartlitz, *Die Berichterstattung des Berliner Rundfunks über den Nürnberger Prozeß gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher 1945/46*, (Unpublished Magisterarbeit, University of Bremen, 2000). Copy on file at the DRA.

Rundfunk reporters such as Rudolf Miessner and Alfred Duchrow presented their own views and thoughts on the trials. There was rarely much difference between the individual broadcasters beyond style and presentation. Interpretation remained firmly grounded in Marxist-Leninist ideology. For Berliner Rundfunk, the trials were about more than just bringing those responsible for the war to justice. While many commentators discussed the defendants and their individual crimes and character, they also stressed that the war's causes went beyond the actions of the defendants. The war criminals were symbols of those elements in German society that had permitted the ascendancy of the Nazis: Militarism, Imperialism, and the corrupting influence of High Finance and Capitalism.⁴⁶ On September 1, 1945, Arthur Mannbar established this notion when he declared, "Here we find the representatives of the three pillars of Hitler's Germany: the Generals, the Weapons Industry, and the Nazi Party—this is the clique which is directly responsible for the war."⁴⁷

This idea was pervasive. On November 30, 1945, in a report entitled "Das Lachen wird ihnen vergehen" ("They Will Stop Laughing") Alfred DÜchrow described how the defendants began the day's proceedings laughing and in a jovial mood, only to slowly fall silent as they listened to the testimony and saw documentary footage of their crimes. Duchrow declared, "All 20 defendants are responsible! Responsible for the wrongdoings committed by the Hitler Regime in the course of twelve and a half years.

⁴⁶ Sixty years after the trials, Markus Wolf still adhered to this interpretation of the trials and of the rise of Nazism. In an interview with the BBC given in 2005, he declared, "We must not forget that many Germans supported Hitler, he came to power with the help of German capitalists and business leaders." Markus Wolf, "Interview with the BBC, November 19, 2005." Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4452302.stm>

⁴⁷ Sendemanuskript, "Überblick über die wichtigsten internationalen Ereignisse der Woche," Berliner Rundfunk, September 1, 1945, Arthur Mannbar, Deutsches Rundfunk Archiv (DRA) Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-10/0015. "Auf ihr finden wir die Vertreter der drei Säulen Hitler-Deutschlands—die Generalität, die Rüstungsindustrie und die Nazipartei—, das ist die Clique, die unmittelbar verantwortlich für den Krieg ist." Translations throughout are my own. Throughout the dissertation, German quotations are written as they appear in the documentary sources.

Finally, they will stop laughing!”⁴⁸ The title of the commentary was an ironic one, as the phrase “They will stop laughing” originated from a speech delivered by Hitler in September, 1942.⁴⁹ Duchrow clearly sought to stir listeners by invoking Hitler’s language in such an ironic manner.

On November 24, Mannbar asserted that Nuremberg was not just a trial of individuals, but rather a trial against the entire Nazi criminal state, a trial against the militarism and imperialism which had plunged humanity into another war.⁵⁰ It was thus imperative that the tribunal convict and execute the defendants and Berliner Rundfunk’s broadcasts cast no doubt that the defendants were guilty and should all be condemned to death.⁵¹ Shortly before the verdicts were read in October 1946, Heinz Schmidt conveyed this sentiment when he declared that the war criminals needed to die so that Germany could live. The phrase was clearly meant to evoke the legacy of the French Revolution. In 1792, at the trial of Louis XVI, Maximillian Robespierre made a similar declaration when he stated, “Louis must die, so that the country may live.” Schmidt’s broadcast aimed to draw clear parallels between postwar Germany and revolutionary France.⁵²

Thus, Berliner Rundfunk’s reporters saw the trials as an opportunity for Germany to purge once and for all those elements that had helped make the Third Reich possible.

In an October 27 1945 broadcast, Mannbar drew a direct line between the Kaiserreich

⁴⁸ Sendemanuskript, “Das Lachen wird ihnen vergehen,” Berliner Rundfunk, November 30, 1945, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0057. “Alle 20 Angeklagten sind verantwortlich! Verantwortlich für alles, was das Hitler-Regime in den 12.5 Jahren am Missetaten vollbracht hat. Das Lachen wird ihnen bald endgültig vergehen!”

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2006), 166-167.

⁵⁰ Sendemanuskript, “Überblick über die wichtigsten internationalen Ereignisse der Woche,” Berliner Rundfunk, November 24, 1945, Arthur Mannbar, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0631.

⁵¹ Bartlitz, 27.

⁵² Sendemanuskript, “Tageskommentar: Nürnberg kein Abschluß, sondern ein Anfang,” Berliner Rundfunk, October 2, 1946, Heinz Schmidt, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-01/0061. “Aus all diesen Gründen kann und darf Nürnberg nur ein Anfang sein, ein Anfang der Abrechnung mit den großen Kriegsverbrechern, die sterben müssen, auf daß Deutschland lebe!”

and Hitler's regime. "As is generally known, those guilty for the First World War escaped without punishment. The Kaiser withdrew to Holland. His defeated generals and the great industrialists, who were initially timid and humble, continued the business of German imperialism with boldness and proven routine."⁵³ Now, the people of Germany had the opportunity to insure that this mistake was not made a second time. The present situation was an opportunity for the German people to face the crimes of the Third Reich and help create a new, democratic Germany.⁵⁴

Berliner Rundfunk's commentators depicted Alfred Krupp and other German industrialists as representatives of the greater forces of high finance and capitalism. Furthermore, it was the alliance between the forces of fascism, monopoly capital, and militarism, that had led to the war. In a broadcast from December 1945, Alfred Duchrow noted: "Up to now, the trial has furnished documentary proof that Hitler and his Party were financed and aided by the most powerful representatives of German monopoly capital and that a close alliance existed between the leading Nazis (including their ministers) and the great stockholders of the German armaments industry."⁵⁵ Two days later, Duchrow reminded his listeners that they needed to remember the complicity of figures such as Krupp and noted that the Nazi leadership and the monopoly capitalists were "inseparable."⁵⁶ One one was inconceivable without the other. Duchrow continued

⁵³ Sendemanuskript, "Überblick über die wichtigsten internationalen Ereignisse der Woche," October 27, 1945, Berliner Rundfunk, Arthur Mannbar, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-10/0022. "Die Schuldigen des ersten Weltkrieges sind bekanntlich strafflos davongekommen. Der Kaiser zog sich nach Holland zurück, während seine geschlagenen Generale und die Großindustriellen zuerst schüchtern und bescheiden, dann aber frech und mit bewährter Routine die Geschäfts des deutschen Imperialismus fortsetzen."

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Sendemanuskript, "Zwischenbilanz aus Nürnberg," Berliner Rundfunk, December 20, 1945, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0342. "Der bisherige Verlauf des Prozesses erbrachte den dokumentarischen Nachweis, daß Hitler und seine Partei von den mächtigsten Vertretern des deutschen Monopolkapitals gefördert und finanziert worden sind, daß ein enges Einvernehmen zwischen den führenden Nazis samt ihren Ministern und den Großaktionären der deutschen Rüstungsindustrie bestand."

⁵⁶ Sendemanuskript, "Shatten der Vergangenheit," Berliner Rundfunk, December 14, 1945, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0457. "untrennbar."

to stress the point a year later, when he noted that the Nuremberg Trials were just the first step, and that further trials would need be held against those forces which had helped the Nazis: the financiers and the large scale industrialists.⁵⁷ Alongside the financiers and capitalists were the German militarists. On December 12, Duchrow noted the involvement of the Wehrmacht and military forces in the invasion of Poland and the destruction of Warsaw.⁵⁸ A month later, after SS soldier Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski testified before the tribunal, Duchrow noted that the Wehrmacht high command and generals were aware of the actions of the SS mobile killing units on the Eastern Front.⁵⁹ In January 1946, Arthur Mannbar noted that the Wehrmacht was complicit in mass murder of Russians on the Eastern Front.⁶⁰

When discussing the crimes of the Nazis and the Wehrmacht, the reports almost always focused on the Eastern Front and the Soviet Union. Broadcasts gave little attention to the Western Front and Western Allies. While this was a reflection of the Eastern Front's importance in the context of the war, it also reflected the communist assertion that the invasion of the Soviet Union was the Nazi's greatest crime.⁶¹ On January 12, Mannbar presented a commentary discussing the crimes of Keitel and Jodl, noting their goals for colonization in the east. He noted the Nazi's annexation of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the crimes against the Soviet Union.⁶² On March 2, 1946, Marcus

⁵⁷ Sendemanuskript, "Das Nürnberger Urteil," Berliner Rundfunk, October 1, 1946, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-01/59.

⁵⁸ Sendemanuskript, "Spionage-Chef Lahousen vor Gericht," Berliner Rundfunk, December 2, 1945, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0058.

⁵⁹ Sendemanuskript, "Ein SS-General im Kreuzverhör," Berliner Rundfunk, January 8, 1946, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0506.

⁶⁰ Sendemanuskript, "Überblick über die wichtigsten internationalen Ereignisse der Woche," Berliner Rundfunk, January 5, 1946, Arthur Mannbar, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-01/0094.

⁶¹ Christina Morina, *Legacies of Stalingrad: The Eastern Front War and Politics of Memory in Divided Germany, 1943-1989*, Dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2007.

⁶² Sendemanuskript, "Überblick über die wichtigsten internationalen Ereignisse der Woche," January 12, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Arthur Mannbar, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-01/0093.

Wolf broadcast an ode to the Red Army. He singled out the Soviets as having suffered more than any other nation in Eastern Europe. He also stressed the sacrifices and losses suffered by the Soviets as they fought to liberate these nations from Hitler's domination. Thus, the coming twenty-eighth anniversary of the Red Army's creation was an important day not just for the Soviet Union. Wolf proclaimed admiration for the Red Army, noting that, "Freedom loving nations remember that the Red Army delivered the most powerful blow against Hitler's armies and that it was the decisive contribution to their liberation."⁶³ As in most other reports on the trials, there was little acknowledgment of the contributions of the Western Allies. Predictably, broadcasts condemning Hitler's invasion of Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe did not mention the Soviet's own invasion of the country or the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed in August 1939.

Although the majority of broadcasts focused on the defendants and the institutions they represented, Berliner Rundfunk did not ignore Adolf Hitler himself and the station ran a number of reports on the dictator. In November 1945 Duchrow noted that the war had been Hitler's war, and despite the complicit forces of imperialism and militarism, it was Hitler who sought war at any price.⁶⁴ The speaker concluded that, "Hitler would be the twenty-first [defendant], if we could count him; no, he would be the first of the twenty-one defendants." In a December 5, 1945 broadcast, Duchrow characterized Hitler as a gangster rather than an ideologue. Hitler ruled through threats and intimidation like a common thug. However, his threats only worked on weaker people. As Duchrow declared, "Perhaps the pistol on the table could have intimidated some weakling. But

⁶³ Sendemanuskript, "Politische Wöchenübersicht," March 2, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Markus Wolf, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-01/0103. "Die friedliebenden Völker erinnerten sich daran, daß die Rote Armee den mächtigsten Andrang der Hitler-Armeen aufgefangen und den entscheidenden Beitrag zu ihrer Befreiung geleistet hat."

⁶⁴ Sendemanuskript, "Der Einundzwanzigste!," November 27, 1945, Berliner Rundfunk, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0060.

then came those who were stronger, who lead the struggle to victory over Nazism, Hitler, and the twenty war criminals of Nuremberg!”⁶⁵ For the most part, Hitler’s ideology was characterized as a brutalized expression of German imperialist and militarist traditions. For example, reporters characterized his quest for “living space” in the east as an imperialist policy of mass plunder, rather than as a quest for a racialist utopia for the German people.⁶⁶ The broadcaster downplayed those elements of Hitler’s ideology that could not be reconciled with the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of fascism as a brutalized version of monopoly capitalism and militarism.

Among these elements was the place of the Jews and the Final Solution amongst the Nazi’s crimes. Berliner Rundfunk did not ignore the Final Solution. However, considering the scale and size of the crime and the centrality of the Jews to Hitler’s worldview and goals, it did not feature in most commentaries, especially when compared to the war against the Soviet Union. For the most part, Berliner Rundfunk counted the Jews a just one amongst the numerous victims of Nazism. A number of reports described the Nazi campaign against the Jews in some detail however. However, none of these reports are devoted specifically to the Final Solution. The most detailed was a broadcast on July 31, 1946 which spoke specifically of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis.⁶⁷ The report acknowledged that the Nazis had carried out a concerted “operation of extermination” against the Jews and described in detail Rudolf Hoess’s testimony of

⁶⁵ Sendemanuskript, “Die Pistole auf dem Tische,” December 5, 1945, Berliner Rundfunk, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0447. “Die Pistole auf dem Tische konnte wohl einigen Schwächlingen imponieren. Dann sind Stärkere gekommen, die den Kampf nicht fürchteten und sie haben gesiegt—über den Nazismus, über Hitler und die 20 Kriegsverbrecher von Nürnberg!”

⁶⁶ Sendemanuskript, “Bericht Nürnberg,” November 25, 1945, Berliner Rundfunk, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0631.

⁶⁷ Sendemanuskript, “Anklage gegen die Naziorganisationen im Nürnberger Prozess,” August 8, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Ferdinand Deml, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-01/0085.

his activities as commandant of the Auschwitz Death Camp.⁶⁸ Beyond this, however, most references to the final solution were brief or presented only because they were part of a witness's testimony. An example of the former was made in December of 1945 as the speaker noted that amongst the Nazi's crimes were the deaths of over 20 million people, of whom 6 million were Jews. The report did not go into any greater depth.⁶⁹ One commentary from September 1945 by Otto Schliewiensky contended that although the Jews were one of many victims of the Nazis, reparations needed to be paid for those victims who had survived the persecution.⁷⁰ An example of the latter was a report made by Mannbar and Wolf in which a witness, Samuel Reissman, testified in February of 1946 on his experience at the Treblinka Death Camp and the use of gas chambers there.⁷¹ Thus, while Berliner Rundfunk acknowledged the Nazi's campaign of extermination against the Jews of Europe, they focused more on the crimes against the Soviet Union and the people of Eastern Europe in general.

This lacuna did not go unnoticed by at least one Berliner Rundfunk listener. An anonymous letter sent to the station dated June 19, 1947 expresses frustration at the failure of the station and the German Communist leadership to address the issue. "I have yet to hear any hint from these men [Grotewohl and Pieck] that Hitler primarily fought a 'defensive war' against the Jews and did so in the most criminal manner."⁷² The radio

⁶⁸ Ibid., "Vernichtungsaktionen."

⁶⁹ Sendemanuskript, "Zwischenbilanz aus Nürnberg," December 20, 1945, Berliner Rundfunk, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0342.

⁷⁰ Sendemanuskript, "Vorlag/Die deutschen Juden," September 18, 1945, B202-00-06/0189, "Was wir wissen müssen/Mutige Demonstrationen im Dritten Reich," September 28, 1945, Berliner Rundfunk, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B202-00-06/0260.

⁷¹ Sendemanuskript, "Berliner Rundfunk Ihr Sonderberichterstatte," February 27, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Markus Wolf and Arthur Mannbar, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-01/0242.

⁷² Anonymous letter to Berliner Rundfunk, July 19, 1947, Büro des Intendanten, Hörerabteilung, Hörerpost, 1946-1951, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, H 201-00-04/0001. "Ich habe in den Ausführungen dieser Herren bislang jede Andeutung darüber vermisst, dass Hitler zu allererst den „Abwehrkampf“ gegen die Juden und zwar in der verbrecherischsten Weise, führte."

station had failed to address in any way how Jews who survived Hitler's terror would be compensated for the loss of property and possessions appropriated by the Nazi government and for the "twelve to fifteen lost years of pain and hunger."⁷³ As Jeffrey Herf has shown, German communists largely evaded the issue of the Final Solution and reparations, focusing more on the Nazi's crimes against the Soviet Union.⁷⁴ This approach can be seen in Berliner Rundfunk's broadcasts.

The majority of Berliner Rundfunk broadcasts were supportive of the Nuremberg trial proceedings. They saw the trial as a necessary and important means for disseminating the truth about the Nazi regime and laying the groundwork for a peaceful, antifascist Germany. However, by the summer of 1946, with the date of the highly anticipated verdict drawing nearer, critical comments began to emerge. In July 1946, for example, Marcus Wolf expressed impatience with the court proceedings and argued that the trial could have been quicker.⁷⁵ However, this minor critique soon gave way to outrage and a flood of critical broadcasts when the verdicts were announced in October 1946. The reporters at Berliner Rundfunk had no problems with those found guilty. The bulk of the critical reports were directed at the three acquittals: Hjalmar Schacht, Franz von Papen, and Hans Fritzsche.

The outrage revealed the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology on Berliner Rundfunk's reporters. To a Soviet Communist's eyes, men like Schacht and von Papen were representative of the very forces that had permitted the rise of Fascism. The Baron Chancellor who had orchestrated Hitler's appointment to the Chancellorship, von Papen

⁷³ Ibid. "Auch der Rundfunk spricht nicht von den wenigen, dem Hitlerterror entronnenen Juden, die vergeblich auf die versprochene Wiedergutmachung (eine solche gibt es natürlich gar nicht, denn wer kann Tote lebendig machen und zwölf bis fünfzehn verlorene Jahre der Pein und des Hungers wieder gutmachen?) waren."

⁷⁴ Herf, *Divided Memory*.

⁷⁵ Sendemanuskript, "Tageskommentar no. 38," July 31, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Markus Wolf, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B203-01-01/0027.

represented Germany's aristocrats and landed elites who paved the way for fascism's rise. Even more outrageous was Schacht's acquittal, for as Hitler's finance minister he represented the most potent and powerful enablers of the Nazi dictatorship.⁷⁶

Berliner Rundfunk broadcast about half a dozen commentaries devoted specifically to criticizing the verdicts. Indeed, noticeably missing are commentaries on the actual guilty verdicts or death sentences. During a broadcast made on the day after the verdict's announcement, Wolf focused on Schacht and von Papen, describing their performance at the press conference following the trial as arrogant and self-assured.⁷⁷ Wolf characterized the conference (and the acquittal as a whole) as an "inglorious event," and evidence that the struggle against Nazism was not yet complete.⁷⁸ Heinz Schmidt noted that while the guilty verdicts were to be welcomed, he noted, "However, at the same time, for the man on the street, at work, the workers and employees in the factories and office, in the emporia and workshops, in the assembly plants in the city and country, there is only one opinion: these acquittals are a threat to the democratic renewal of Germany!"⁷⁹ Progressive forces in Germany now had reason to fear that fascist forces in Germany would welcome the verdicts as a means for strengthening their positions.⁸⁰ On

⁷⁶ One did not have to be a Marxist-Leninist to be angered by Schacht or von Papen's acquittal. The American Prosecutor Robert Jackson regretted that someone like Schacht could be found not guilty when he learned of the verdict. "Goering, Ribbentrop, 10 Others to Hang; Von Papen, 2 More Freed; 7 Get Prison," *Washington Post*, October 2, 1946.

⁷⁷ Sendemanuskript, "Tageskommentar," October 3, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Marcus Wolf, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B203-01-01/0060. *The Washington Post* also thought the acquitted behaved in an arrogant and self-assured manner. "Shortly after their acquittal, Schacht, Von Papen and Fritzsche strolled smilingly out of the jail and held a turbulent news conference at which Schacht was as cocky and beligerent and cocky as ever." *Washington Post*, October 2, 1946.

⁷⁸ Sendemanuskript, "Tageskommentar," October 3, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Markus Wolf, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B203-01-01/0060. "Doch genug über dieses unrühmliche Ereignis, das davon zeugt, dass mit dem Urteilsspruch über das Naziregimes der Kampf noch nicht abgeschlossen ist."

⁷⁹ Sendemanuskript, "Tageskommentar: Nürnberg kein Abschluß, sondern ein Anfang," October 2, 1946, Heinz Schmidt, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B203-01-01/61 "Aber es gab gleichzeitig bei dem Mann auf der Strasse, (end insert) bei den Arbeitern und Angestellten in den Fabriken und Büros, in den Läden und Werkstätten, bei allen aufbauwilligen Kräften in Stadt und Land nur eine Meinung: Diese Freisprüche sind eine Gefährdung für eine demokratische Erneuerung Deutschlands!"

⁸⁰ Ibid.

October 6, Seydewitz reiterated this idea, noting that while the representatives of Nazism (Göring, Ribbentrop, Rosenberg) and the representatives of German militarism (Jodl, Keitel) had been brought to justice, the representatives of “finance and monopoly capitalism,” Schacht and von Papen, had been set free. In his commentary he asked, “Was that justice, my worthy listeners?”⁸¹

Berliner Rundfunk’s reaction to the verdicts reflected their belief that the Nuremberg defendants were symbols of broader reactionary forces. Thus, they characterized the verdict not only as the acquittal of two men who had been complicit in the Nazi’s rise to power, but also as a failure on the part of the Western Allies to acknowledge the role monopoly capital and high finance had played in building the Third Reich. This approach can be seen in a broadcast sent on September 17, 1946, a month before the tribunal announced the verdicts. The commentator, DVV official Wilhelm Girnus, described Schacht as “the key to the entire trial.”⁸² He was the representative of “German high finance, the plunderer with the manners of a gentleman, who used his international capitalist relationships and old membership in the bourgeois Democratic Party to make Hitler’s program presentable (*salonfähig*).”⁸³ Schacht had translated Hitler’s rhetoric into the “clouded language of capitalist diplomacy.”⁸⁴ It had been Schacht who helped fund the Nazi party so that they could fulfill the imperialist goals of finance capital and rebuild the rearmaments industry.

⁸¹ Sendemanuskript, “Das Echo des Nürnberger Urteils im deutschen Volk,” October 6, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Max Seydewitz, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-01/0186. “War das gerecht, meine verehrten Hörer?”

⁸² Sendemanuskript, “Vor dem Urteilsspruch in Nuernberg,” September 17, 1946, Berliner Rundfunk, Wilhelm Girnus, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B203-01-01/0185. “In diesem Sinne ist Angeklagte Schacht die Schlüsselgestalt des ganzen Prozesses.”

⁸³ Ibid, “Schacht ist der Vertreter der deutschen Hochfinanz, Schacht ist der Räuber mit den Gentleman-Manieren, der seine internationalen kapitalistischen Beziehungen und seine frühere Zugehörigkeit zu der bürgerlichen demokratischen Partei dazu nuetzte, um Hitlers Programm salonfähig zu machen.” The German Democratic Party, or DDP, was a left of center liberal party founded in 1919. Schacht was one of its earliest members.

⁸⁴ Ibid., “...die beschlagene Sprach der kapitalistischen Diplomatie....”

The fact that Girnus gave this commentary a month before the tribunal announced the verdicts illustrates the strong influence Marxism-Leninist ideology held over Berliner Rundfunk. The outrage over the acquittals was not just a reaction to the fact that some of the defendants were found not guilty, but was based on a systematic, and well developed argument grounded in Soviet Communist ideology. This accounts for the lack of focus on Heinz Fritzsche (a member of the propaganda ministry), who was not involved in economic policy or a representative of the old aristocracy. For Berliner Rundfunk's reporters, the acquittals revealed the failure of the Nuremberg Tribunal to fully grasp and understand the true nature of fascism. Schacht and von Papen were not just two individuals, but representatives of deeper forces embedded within German society, "Monopoly Capital" and "Finance Capital," ("capital" was almost always spoken with one of these two qualifiers), and the power of the old Junker elites. The station's reporters thus asserted that the Tribunal's failure to acknowledge this influence would hinder Germany's peaceful and democratic rebirth.

Berliner Rundfunk's commentaries on the Nuremberg Trials combined both a wish to present the trial's proceedings with a desire to explain the true nature of fascism. Doing both would insure the creation of an antifascist Germany. Several broadcasts reminded listeners that the Nazis were not defeated by forces within Germany, but by the Allied armies, most importantly the Red Army.⁸⁵ By following the trials, Berliner Rundfunk's commentators argued, Germans would be prepared to continue the process begun by the Allies and bring others to justice, notably the large business and industrial leaders who had collaborated with the Nazis and allowed them to wage war. Berliner

⁸⁵ See Bartlitz and Galle. In 2005, Markus Wolf recalled, "The German people couldn't bring these Nazis to justice. I had to explain to people that it was the victors' court as the Allies organised the trials." Interview with BBC, November 15, 2005.

Rundfunk interpreted the trials as a founding rite and a means of paving the way for the creation of an antifascist Germany accepted by the community of nations.

The German Left: Creating the Socialist Unity Party

Berliner Rundfunk's approach to the Nuremberg Trials reflected many basic Marxist-Leninist tenants. They argued that the war was the result of German militarism, imperialism, and finance-capital. For the most part, Berliner Rundfunk's commentaries ignored the ideological super structure of National Socialism. Thus it was apparent that when Berliner Rundfunk spoke of rebuilding Germany and laying the foundations for a new democratic order, it was not one that would be friendly to capitalism. In light of this, it is illuminating and critical to examine how Berliner Rundfunk approached the question of socialism and the German Left. The most prominent commentaries on this topic involved Berliner Rundfunk's support for plans to unite the social democratic and communist parties.

Tactical aims were the primary motivation behind the Soviet's plan to merge the two largest left-wing parties in the SBZ: the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Communists (KPD). The SMA and KPD leaders considered the unification of the political left a critical part of their greater goal of consolidating control not only over their zone of authority, but also the western sectors of Berlin. Many Germans, including members of the KPD itself, saw the German Communists as puppets of the Soviets.⁸⁶ Uniting with the SPD would allow the KPD to take advantage of the SPD's popularity in

⁸⁶ Wolfgang Leonhard, *Child of the Revolution*, trans. C. M. Woodhouse (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1958), 360.

Berlin (where the first major elections would be held in the fall of 1946), and also neutralize a potential left-wing rival.⁸⁷

At the same time, for many Germans of the political left, the time seemed appropriate for a renewal of cooperation between Germany's two working class parties. The two parties had been divided since World War I and the failed German Revolution of 1918. Many amongst the KPD considered the SPD's support of the German war effort in 1914, its leading role in suppressing the German Revolution in 1918, and its support of the bourgeois Weimar Republic to be unforgivable betrayals of the German working class and German socialism. As a result, the KPD refused to acknowledge the SPD's claim to represent the working class and characterized the party's members as "social fascists."⁸⁸ Despite the increasing popularity of the National Socialists, many in the KPD continued to assert that the SPD was the greater of the two political opponents. Consequently, the German Left was bitterly divided and fractured at the onset of the Great Depression and unable to unite and form a viable coalition to prevent the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor in 1933.

The common experience of persecution, exile, and imprisonment seemed to provide the impetus for renewed cooperation and unity amongst the political left. It was along these lines that Berliner Rundfunk promoted the unification of the two parties throughout 1945 and 1946. However, many amongst the SPD, most notably its leader in the Western Zones, Kurt Schumacher, saw the proposal as a Soviet directed measure designed to increase their influence in Germany by co-opting the more popular SPD.

⁸⁷ For scholarship on the creation of the Socialist Unity Party, see Henry Krisch, *German Politics under Soviet Occupation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). See as well Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 251-317.

⁸⁸ See Herf, *Divided Memory* for the KPD's relationship to the SPD during the Weimar Republic.

Despite Schumacher's opposition, SPD leaders in the Soviet Zone, most notably Otto Grotewohl, embraced the idea of uniting the two parties.⁸⁹

The merger became a prominent subject of Berliner Rundfunk's early broadcasts. Between the summer of 1945 and the creation of the Socialist Unity Party in April of 1946, Berliner Rundfunk broadcast some 40 commentaries devoted entirely to the creation of a united working class party.⁹⁰ The broadcasts shared many common themes and arguments. All of the broadcasts insisted that there was a direct causal link between the fracturing of the German left during the Weimar Republic and the rise of Nazism. Related to this, all of the commentaries argued that the only way Germany could be rebuilt was to end this division and create a democratic state based firmly on an anti-fascist foundation. Thus, uniting the working class was not a matter of political expediency (which was flatly denied), but a moral means of overcoming Germany's fascist past and creating a peaceful postwar order. If leftwing Germans wanted to secure peace and rebuild Germany, then they had no alternative but to reaffirm Marxist principles and reunite as a single movement.

Most of the commentaries on the creation of a unity party clearly present these various arguments. On June 23, 1945, the political program *Tribüne der Demokratie* broadcast a report on one of the first meetings between leaders of the newly re-chartered SPD and KPD, including Grotewohl from the SPD and Ulbricht and Pieck from the KPD. At the meeting, held just over a month after the capitulation, the commentary reported that the decision was made to rebuild Germany and create a new state free of Nazism

⁸⁹ Krisch, *German Politics under Soviet Occupation*.

⁹⁰ Alexander Greguletz, *Inventar der Manuskriptbestände des Berliner Rundfunks (1945-1950)*, (Potsdam : Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999).

based on a firm anti-fascist foundation that would not repeat the mistakes of the past.⁹¹ While the broadcast did not suggest merging the parties, it nevertheless affirmed the idea that only through unity and common purpose could the German left prevent the resurrection of fascism. On July 14, 1945, Berliner Rundfunk broadcast an interview between a Soviet journalist and leading members of the SPD in the SBZ, including Otto Grotewohl and Max Fechner. Through the course of the interview, the SPD leaders acknowledged that many mistakes had been made in the past, most notably the failure of the SPD and KPD to form a united front against the Nazis. This accordingly led to the weakening of the working class's strength and allowed the Nazis and their German Imperialist allies to launch the Second World War.⁹²

Even when the main topic of a particular broadcast was not the creation of a unity party, KPD leaders and Berliner Rundfunk found subtle means of promoting the merging of the left-wing parties. An example of this was a presentation made by Anton Ackermann commemorating the 125th birthday of Frederick Engels, broadcast on December 8, 1945. In the course of the broadcast, Ackermann noted that it was encouraging to see communists and social democrats coming together to commemorate the anniversary.⁹³ At the same time, Ackermann reaffirmed the argument that uniting the two parties was imperative. He declared, "We vow to march in unity under the banner of Marx and Engels; *only in unity* is our strength guaranteed and *only in unity* is success

⁹¹ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, June 23, 1945, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0004.

⁹² Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, July 14 1945, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0009.

⁹³ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, December 8, 1945, Anton Ackermann, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0296.

guaranteed.”⁹⁴ In the manuscript, the phrase “nur die einheit” (only in unity) is underlined on numerous occasions. In the course of the broadcast, Ackermann reaffirmed the link between German communists in the SBZ and the Soviet Union. Socialism, Ackermann asserted, had risen because of Lenin’s efforts, and under Stalin it had achieved victory in the Soviet Union. “Consequently, one cannot be a Marxist without accepting the teachings of Lenin and Stalin. Their teachings, their science, are the Marxism of today.” Thus, the theoretical Socialist Unity Party, though a union between the German SPD and KPD, would need to embrace the Soviet Union’s interpretation of Marxism.⁹⁵

The wish to see a unity party was not just one held by communist leaders, Berliner Rundfunk asserted. On January 19, 1946 the station broadcast an interview between Werner Klein and workers at a Factory in Saxony. While the goal of the interview was to demonstrate the wish amongst Germans for a unity party, the answers so closely reflected the rhetoric and language of Berliner Rundfunk and the SBZ press that it came across as artificial. The questions were posed to members of the KPD and SPD respectively, to demonstrate the unity of thought amongst members of the two parties. When one worker was asked about his feelings concerning the unity party, he answered that, as a member of the KPD, he and his colleagues stood fundamentally for the unification of the working class and would do all they can to achieve it. He stated that it was the only way to completely remove Nazism from German society.⁹⁶ He further noted that, “This should be our task. Just as we were in the concentration camps together

⁹⁴ Ibid. “Wir wollen geloben, in fest geschlossener Einheit unter dem Banner von Marx und Engels zu marschieren; denn *nur die Einheit* ist unsere Stärke und *nur die Einheit* ist die Garantie unseres Erfolges.” Italics are my own.

⁹⁵ Ibid. “Folglich kann man heute nicht Marxist sein, ohne die Lehren Lenins und Stalins anzuerkennen. Denn ihre Lehren, ihre Wissenschaft, das ist der Marximus von heute.”

⁹⁶ Sendemanuskript, “Interview des Reporters Werner Klein mit Arbeitern des Sächsischen Aufbau-Werkes,” Berliner Rundfunk, January 19, 1946, Werner Klein, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0511.

with our comrades from the SPD, arm and arm, so we should also achieve this [socialist unity] arm in arm.”⁹⁷ An answer to the same question from a member of the SPD continued this line of argument, noting that the past twelve years had shown the consequences of disunity between the two left-wing parties.

Other reports attempted to soften the German left’s traditionally combative language of inevitable class conflict and revolution. One can see this in a report from Tribune of Democracy broadcast on February 16, 1946. The broadcast was a commentary on the *Communist Manifesto* by Fred Oelßner, a member of the Culture Department of the Central Committee of the KPD. The original, unedited version of the manuscript read:

The powerful words with which the *Communist Manifesto* concludes, ‘Proletarians of the world, unite!’ has an especially important meaning for us today. Soon, the German proletariat will overcome the century’s long division and create a strong political force that will gather the democratic strength of our people so that we may fight for a better future.⁹⁸

However, the original manuscript has several editorial suggestions written over the second half of this passage in pencil. The edits subtly changed the tone and insured that the correct political message was broadcast:

⁹⁷ Ibid., “Das soll unsere Aufgabe sein, genau so wie wir im Konzentrationslager gemeinsam mit den SPD Genossen und allen Arm in Arm gegangen sind, werden wir auch hier versuchen, gemeinsam Arm in Arm zu gehen.”

⁹⁸ Sendermanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, February 21, 1946, Fred Oelssner, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0044. The original, without edits, would have read: “Das wuchtige Losungswort, mit dem das ‘Kommunistische Manifest’ ausklingt: ‘Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt Euch!’ ist für uns heute von besonderer Bedeutung. Die Proletarier-Deutschlands ist dabei, die jahrzehntelange Spaltung zu überwinden um die starke politische Kraft zu schaffen, um die sich alle demokratischen Kräfte unseres Volkes sammeln zum Kampf um die bessere Zukunft.”

The powerful words with which the *Communist Manifesto* concludes, 'Proletarians of the world, unite!' has an especially important meaning for us today. Soon, the German *working class* will overcome the century's long division *and will unite into a socialist unity Party*, and create a strong political force that will gather the democratic strength of our people in order to fight for a better future.⁹⁹

It is not clear from the manuscript if Oelßner or a Berliner Rundfunk editor made these changes. The original version's use of "proletariat" was most likely made to keep the passage stylistically similar to Marx's original text. However, the term "proletarian" has a much more revolutionary connotation than the more neutral "working class." By changing the phrase, Berliner Rundfunk not only changed the tone, but also kept the broadcast in line with almost all of their other commentaries (which almost always used "German working class" as opposed to "German proletarians.") They also used it as a chance to stress the overall political goal of the Soviets and German communists. Not only will the working class unite, it will unite as a Unity Party.

Overall, the broadcasts conveyed a conciliatory tone. The heated rhetoric between SPD and KPD, which had defined their relationship since the First World War, was softened. Almost all of the broadcasts depicted the SPD and KPD as fully equal, and made it clear that any unification of the two parties would be a joint ("gemeinsam") and mutual alliance. Discussion of 1933 only mentioned that disunity had been the cause, but did not note who was at fault for this disunity. Several broadcasts revealed cracks in this

⁹⁹ Ibid. The revised manuscript reads: "Das wuchtige Losungswort, mit dem das 'Kommunistische Manifest' ausklingt: 'Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt Euch!' ist für uns heute von besonderer Bedeutung. Die *Arbeiterklasse* Deutschlands ist dabei, die jahrzehntelange Spaltung zu überwinden und *sich in einer sozialistischen Einheitspartei zu vereinigen* um die starke politische Kraft zu schaffen, um die sich alle demokratischen Kräfte unseres Volkes sammeln zum Kampf um die bessere Zukunft." (Italics denote editorial remarks in pencil).

interpretation of events however. East German communists saw 1945 as a “Hegelian moment.” The victory of the Red Army had demonstrated the scientific validity of Marxist-Leninist historical materialism.¹⁰⁰ Yet, while Berliner Rundfunk promoted this concept, as seen in Wolf’s praise of the Red Army in his Nuremberg reports, it also presented the assertion that 1918 *should* have been a Hegelian event. With the fall of the Kaiser and the end of World War I, the November Revolution should have been the moment that Germany became a socialist state. Yet, when history demanded the full participation of the German left to purge once and for all militarism, imperialism, and racism from the German national psyche, the SPD betrayed the left by employing right-wing Free Corps to crush the revolution. A critical part of the German communist master narrative was that it was the SPD, and not the KPD, that was at fault for fracturing the German left and permitting the rise of Hitler.¹⁰¹

Despite the apparently new spirit of conciliation between SPD and KPD, many communist leaders did not forget the bitterness of 1918. When Berliner Rundfunk broadcast an interview with Walter Ulbricht from October, 1945, careful listeners would have noticed that Ulbricht clearly felt the KPD’s approach to socialism was superior and that it had sacrificed more for the good of Germany. Ulbricht declared that, while the SPD was a fellow party of the left, it was members KPD who had led the Spartacus revolt in 1919 and it was KPD leader Ernst Thälmann who had died leading the opposition against Hitler.¹⁰² Although he reiterated the common arguments for the unity party, stressing the link between the need to rebuild Germany and uniting the workers’

¹⁰⁰ Herf, “ ‘Hegelianische Momente.’ Gewinner und Verlierer in der ostdeutschen Erinnerung an Krieg, Diktatur, und Holocaust,” in *Erinnerungskulturen: Deutschland, Italien und Japan seit 1945*, ed. Christoph Cornelißen, Lutz Klinkhammer, Wolfgang Schwentker, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003), 198-209.

¹⁰¹ Herf, *Divided Memory*, 15.

¹⁰² Sendemanuskript, “Tribune der Demokratie,” Berliner Rundfunk, October 16, 1945, Markus Wolf, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0594

movement, Ulbricht's rhetoric was more radical, calling for the full participation of all workers on councils and in unions and stressing the sacrifices made by the KPD. By bringing up the prospect of worker's councils, Ulbricht surely aimed to evoke the memory of the 1918-1919 Revolution. In an interview given in January of 1946, Ulbricht reiterated these points, but went further and criticized members of the SPD who refused to acknowledge the need for a unity party.¹⁰³ Ulbricht was most likely referring to Kurt Schumacher when he spoke about the alternate path of those, "social democratic leaders in the west." Ulbricht described this approach as the old path of the Weimar Republic and accommodation with the political right.¹⁰⁴

Other broadcasts made the contention that the SPD was to blame for the rise of the Nazis. A speech given by Wilhelm Pieck and broadcast on Berliner Rundfunk from November 11, 1945 cited the failure of the Revolution of 1918 as one of the events of the past that had allowed the fascist rise to power.¹⁰⁵ On January 11, 1946 Max Fechner noted that, had the workers been united in 1918, then the power of Germany's large industrialists and landed elites could have been broken.¹⁰⁶ In a speech given by Wilhelm Pieck that was broadcast on January 15 to commemorate the deaths of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, (both killed by Free Corps enlisted by the Social Democrats to put down the Spartacus Revolution of 1919), the communist leader noted that the memories of their deaths would be hard to forget.¹⁰⁷ A February commentary by Karl Steinhoff contended that Germany, as in 1918, was once again at a crossroads, thus stressing the

¹⁰³ Sendemanuskript, "Interview between Werner Klein and Walter Ulbricht," Berliner Rundfunk, January 11, 1946, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0587.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, November 12, 1945, Markus Wolf, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 202-00-06/0557.

¹⁰⁶ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, January 12, 1946, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0066.

¹⁰⁷ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, January 15, 1946, Wilhelm Pieck, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0062.

memory of the failed revolution as a warning for the future.¹⁰⁸ Another commentary from February, made by a member of the KPD, Rudolf Lindau, warned listeners not to assume that fascism was completely defeated, for German imperialism had also been beaten in 1918, only to reemerge.¹⁰⁹ This argument was reiterated in an April 1946 broadcast that noted that in 1918, German militarism and imperialism had been brought to their knees, and yet had been allowed a new lease on life after the failed revolution.¹¹⁰ The commentator noted that this was a consequence of the division of socialists and communists during the First World War. None of these broadcasts mentioned the Social Democrats or the role Friedrich Ebert's government played in putting down the Revolutions of 1918 and 1919. However, this would not have been far from the minds of most Germans of the left when recalling the memories of those events, and the implication was clear: Germany had a chance to break the power of German militarism and imperialism in 1918 and failed because the left was divided. Yet, the KPD had at least attempted to launch the revolution. Thus, the SPD was at fault. However, the interest of unity precluded any attacks against the SPD. The SPD of Grotewohl and his allies was a new party according to many commentators, and the shared experience of the Third Reich had mended the wounds between the two parties.

However, SPD leaders such as Kurt Schumacher and Ernst Reuter presented a problem for those seeking a unity party. The leaders of the SPD in the Western Zone and West Berlin respectively, both their credentials as men of the left were impeccable. Schumacher had spent the war in a concentration camp and had both mentally and

¹⁰⁸ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk March 4, 1946, Karl Steinhoff, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0021.

¹⁰⁹ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, February 10, 1946, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0032

¹¹⁰ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk April 24, 1946, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0079.

physically paid for it. Reuter, a former communist, had spent the war years in Turkey. Yet, while so many broadcasts on Berliner Rundfunk were stressing that the common experience of the camps had brought the left closer together, both Schumacher and Reuter remained staunch anti-communists. Both recognized the subservience of the KPD to the Soviet occupation authorities, and recognized that the goal of creating the unity party was hardly a mutual alliance, but a shotgun wedding that would effectively break the power of the social democrats in the Eastern Zone.

Thus, several broadcasts from Berliner Rundfunk attacked Schumacher himself, questioning his right to call himself a true socialist. In February of 1946, a Berliner Rundfunk broadcast confronted Schumacher's arguments head on, claiming that Schumacher sought to bring back the party of 1933, and with it opposition to the communists. Listeners were asked to recall the divisions of the 1930s when they heard Schumacher's anti-communist statements, and interpret them as reactionary.¹¹¹ In another broadcast, taken from an article by Social Democrat Karl Doer entitled "The Saboteur of Unity," Schumacher was condemned for aiding the victory of reaction. The Social Democrats of the Eastern Zone recognized that any division in the working class would only help reactionary elements. It was only natural to expect Schumacher and the Social Democrats in the west to show the same respect to the social democrats in the east. Despite to Schumacher's claims to the contrary, the vast majority of social democrats in the western zones supported building a unification party. If Schumacher maintained his opposition, then true social democrats had no choice but to consider him a saboteur of

¹¹¹ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, March 4, 1946, Karl Steinhoff, DRA Potsdam, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0021.

unity.¹¹² After the creation of the SED, Berliner Rundfunk was forced to explain how it was that, if ninety-nine percent of social democrats supported unity, such a large and powerful SPD remained in the western zone and West Berlin. One solution can be seen in manuscripts where the term “social democrats” is simply placed in quotation marks. There is no indication that the broadcasters had a special technique to allow their listeners to actually *hear* these quotations marks.¹¹³

Conclusion

From 1945-1946, Berliner Rundfunk enjoyed an effective broadcast monopoly in the former German capital. During this period, its journalists had the opportunity to report and interpret some of the most important events of the early occupation period. Most notable among these were the Nuremberg Trials and the creation of the Socialist Unity Party. Recognizing radio’s critical role as a source for information, Soviet leaders used Berliner Rundfunk to announce the capitulation of the Third Reich and the end of fascist rule in Germany. At the same time, Soviet leaders hoped to use radio as a means of establishing a new order in Germany. Thus, from the moment it began broadcasting, Berliner Rundfunk was dedicated to crafting a new political culture for postwar Germany. What this meant exactly was vague. Broadcasts spoke broadly of democratization, denazification, and the renewal of the German economy. Critical to all

¹¹² Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, Berliner Rundfunk, February 15, 1946, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0027.

¹¹³ Examples of this can be seen in the manuscripts for “Kommentar des Tages: Von Fulton bis Haag,” Berliner Rundfunk, May 8, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-02/0031, “Aussenpolitische Wochenübersicht,” August 21, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-02/0107, “Morgenglosse,” Berliner Rundfunk, March 12, 1949, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-01/0538.

broadcasts was the perpetuation of the antifascist coalition. This coalition not only included the United States, Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain, but also all of those political parties that were opposed to the Nazis and newly constituted by the Soviets: the Christian Democrats, Liberals, Communists, and Social Democrats.

However, while the goals and aims described by Berliner Rundfunk broadcasts remained broad and vague, the station was nevertheless committed to presenting Soviet policy. Despite the fact that Berliner Rundfunk was nominally under the authority of German Intendants such as Hans Mahle and Max Seydewitz, SMA censorship bureaus retained oversight authority over all Berliner Rundfunk broadcasts. The Soviets placed responsibility for all radio operations in the hands of loyal German communists such as Hans Mahle and Marcus Wolf. Although they were charged with promoting the common antifascist goals of denazification and democratization held by the allied powers and German political parties, the leaders of Berliner Rundfunk nevertheless utilized Marxist-Leninist narratives to interpret events. The Nuremberg Trial reports of Marcus Wolf stressed the heroic efforts of the Soviet army and characterized Nazism as an incarnation of big capital imperialism. At the same time, Berliner Rundfunk broadcasts presented the proposed merger between the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party as a moral necessity. Broadcasts accused opponents of the fusion of being fascist supporters and opponents of true progress and democratization in Germany. The moral imperative of building a strong communist party outweighed the need for true political plurality.

Thus, by 1946 it was clear to US and British officials that the Communist controlled Berliner Rundfunk would not present a balanced perspective on allied plans in Germany. The Soviet refusal to share control of the station, coupled with the clearly pro-

Soviet tone of its political broadcasts, led both occupying powers to begin construction of their own stations. Anticipating the breakdown of inter-allied governance of Berlin in 1948, the United States launched a rival broadcaster in September 1946: Radio in the American Sector, or RIAS. Although the station's operations would be relatively modest until 1948, its creation nevertheless was the first step in bringing an end to Berliner Rundfunk's broadcasting monopoly.

Chapter Two: Political Broadcasting and the First Berlin Crisis, 1945-1949

With the creation of RIAS in September 1946, both the Soviet Union and the United States had launched stations to serve their respective interests in Berlin. Both stations, Berliner Rundfunk in the Soviet Zone and Radio in the American Sector (RIAS), were created to provide news and entertainment to listeners while also providing a means for both super-powers to present and pursue their respective goals for the future of Germany. Like Berliner Rundfunk, RIAS also pursued a policy of denazification. However, whereas Berliner Rundfunk sought to actively encourage a certain type of political thinking amongst its listeners, RIAS aimed to introduce an American model of journalism to the German public based on objectivity and accuracy that would contribute to the American's goal of democratization, reeducation, and denazification.

In 1946, both radio stations existed in a political landscape that assumed the Allied occupation of Germany would be brief, reunification would come soon, and the United States and Soviet Union would maintain their wartime cooperation. Over the course of the next three years however, the hopes for postwar collaboration had faded and been replaced by suspicion and tension between the United States, Soviet Union, and their respective allies.¹ The unification of the British and American zones of occupation into the Bizone in January 1947, the announcement of the Marshall Plan in June 1947, and the London Foreign Ministers Conference held in the spring of 1948 had made it

¹ For an overview of developments in occupied Germany and the breakdown of interallied cooperation, see Henry Ashby Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*. See as well Gaddis, *We Now Know* and Bernd Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg: Geschichte eines radikalen Zeitalters 1947-1991* (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2007).

clear to Stalin that the United States and Britain would not permit the unification of Germany if it meant opening it to Soviet control. When the US and British sought to stabilize the economies of their occupation zones by introducing a new currency, the Deutschemark, in the spring of 1948, the Soviets condemned it as an attempt to divide Germany and violate inter-allied cooperation. When the Western Allies introduced the new currency into their occupation sectors in Berlin, the Soviets, gambling that neither the US nor Great Britain would risk war over maintaining their rights in Berlin, claimed all of Berlin to be an integral part of the SBZ and ordered a blockade of all traffic to the three western sectors of the city. The Truman administration opted to supply the city by air transports. The airlift was successful, both politically and economically, and in May 1949, the Soviets suspended the blockade and opened traffic to West Berlin.²

Reporting and explaining the events of the blockade and airlift presented challenges for both Berliner Rundfunk and RIAS. Berliner Rundfunk needed to justify what was perceived by many to be an act of aggression to a population that was hardly supportive of the Soviets to begin with. For RIAS, the crisis forced it to make a choice between maintaining complete neutrality with regards to the Soviet Union and thus allowing Berliner Rundfunk's claims and attacks go unanswered, or openly criticizing the Soviets' actions and ideology of Soviet communism. Berliner Rundfunk depicted the blockade as a defensive measure meant to prevent the division of Germany and its economic subjugation at the hands of American big capital and fascism. While Berliner Rundfunk continued to pursue a policy praising the Soviets and their actions, it also engaged and confronted the arguments of the western media, often citing and analyzing

² For literature on the blockade and airlift, see Thomas Parrish, *Berlin in the Balance, 1945-1949: The Blockade, Airlift, the First Major Battle of the Cold War*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1999), Michael Haydock, *City under Siege: The Berlin Blockade and Airlift, 1948-1949* (Washington: Brassey's, 1999).

the western press to find both evidence and justification for the Soviet's actions. RIAS, on the other hand, faced a heavily demoralized population and Berlin political establishment, both of which felt the United States needed to do more to defend the liberal-democratic order against the encroachments of Soviet communism. Thus, RIAS ended its policy of neutrality, and pursued a policy of aggressive anti-communism that characterized the Soviet Union as a totalitarian state that cared little for true workers and sought only to subjugate Eastern Europe and Germany. Just as Berliner Rundfunk argued for continuities between Nazi Germany and the United States, so too, did RIAS draw links between the Nazis and the Soviets.

Historians of the US occupation have often focused on 1947 and the start of the Cold War as a major turning point in US media policies in Germany. These works have argued that the US, initially dedicated to forging a democratic and liberal mass media, turned away from this goal, dismissed individuals sympathetic to the Soviets or to an accommodation with the Soviets, and pursued an aggressive, anti-communist media policy that overlooked journalistic principles in favor of a propaganda war against the Soviets.³ In the words of Larry Hartenian, "The propaganda role of media came to overshadow the original concerns for democratization."⁴ However, as Jessica Gienow-Hecht has demonstrated in her study of the American sponsored *Neue Zeitung*, many decisions regarding the media in postwar Germany were made by lower level officials, many of whom were often Germans themselves.⁵ By focusing on the experience of RIAS within the context of occupied Berlin, we can see that the story was much more complex.

³ Hartenian, *Controlling Information in U.S. Occupied Germany* and Barbara Mettler, *Demokratisierung und Kalter Krieg: Zur Amerikanischen Informations und Rundfunkpolitik in Westdeutschland 1945-1949*, (Berlin: Verlag Volker Spiess, 1975).

⁴ Hartenian, "The Role of the Media in Democratizing Germany: United States Occupation Policy, 1945-1949," *Central European History* 20 (1987): 145.

⁵ Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible*.

1947 was a critical turning point for the station. At the end of that year, the US authorities did dismiss station officials sympathetic to the Soviets. At the same time, the station turned towards anti-communist broadcasting. Yet, it is important to remember that these changes came after two years of pressure from local German political leaders, such as Ernst Reuter, who were becoming increasingly frustrated by RIAS's refusal to repudiate Berliner Rundfunk's attacks against those members of the SPD who opposed the SED. With the city's largest radio station under the control of the SED and Soviet authorities, members of the SPD argued that RIAS's insistence on neutrality allowed the SED to undermine the democratic order in Berlin. Thus, many German and American officials saw the station's turn to anti-communism as a means of strengthening liberalism and democracy in the city, rather than weakening it.

This chapter explores how Berliner Rundfunk and RIAS Berlin reported the events of the Berlin blockade and Berlin airlift. Throughout, I argue that this was a period of fundamental transition in the Berlin radio landscape. By the end of 1949, RIAS had eclipsed Berliner Rundfunk as the most popular source for news in the city. Initially designed to promote neutral, impartial journalism, RIAS redefined its role and directed its programs to the East German population itself with the intent of actively undermining the German Democratic Republic. While RIAS certainly gained listeners because of the quality of its reporting, it nevertheless took advantage of Berliner Rundfunk's failure to present an accurate assessment of the airlift. Predicting that Western efforts to provision the city would fail, the station suffered a blow to its credibility that only became worst as each day of the airlift passed. At the same time, Berliner Rundfunk laid the foundations for a narrative of siege that characterized East Germany as a fragile state under constant

threat from American capitalists and fascists. As a consequence, Marxist-Leninist ideology became a far more overt influence and guiding force on GDR broadcasts.

Berliner Rundfunk and the Berlin Blockade and Airlift 1948-1949

Despite pretensions of creating a broad popular front, Soviet officials and German communists dominated Berliner Rundfunk.⁶ Berliner Rundfunk had demonstrated its Soviet sympathies throughout 1945 and 1946 with its Nuremberg Trial reports and other stories. However, throughout this period, it continued to maintain the position that its support for policies such as the unification of the SPD and SED was simply its way of supporting the antifascist coalition. However, by 1947 it had become clear to US officials that Berliner Rundfunk was firmly in line with Soviet goals and policies. A report drawn up by the US Occupation Government in September 1947 illustrates the bias towards the Soviet perspective at Berliner Rundfunk. Of 1,113 foreign press items, 923 came from Soviet news agencies. Of 721 domestic news items, 268 came from Soviet sources. The report's author noted that Berliner Rundfunk broadcast news according to a "preconceived working plan." Reports focused on Eastern successes and Western failures. The main topics for the Eastern Zone were socialist reconstruction, agricultural production, industrial progress, and trade union activities. Topics on the three Western Zones included the problem of black markets in the British Zone and refugee problems in the American Zone. The SED official organ *Neues Deutschland* and

⁶ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 128

the Soviet licensed *Tägliche Rundschau* were the papers most often cited in Berliner Rundfunk broadcasts.⁷

Despite the dominance of the Soviet viewpoint, the station had attempted to stress the common links between communists and other antifascist parties in Germany. In a September 1946 conference attended by the chief radio officials in the SBZ, a Berliner Rundfunk commentator recommended that stations in the SBZ be aware of “non-partisan” interpretations of major events.⁸ The same official also recommended that Berliner Rundfunk employ a commentator who was not associated with any particular party. Mahle responded that there were no “suitable” individuals who could occupy such a position.⁹ Thus, there was a limit to how “non-partisan” station officials were willing to go. In 1948, for example, reporter Oscar Hoffmann noted, “Even though we are not a Marxist broadcaster, we must still present and express the lessons and analyses of Marxism more than has been done up till now.”¹⁰ Thus, although broadcasts and officials spoke of an antifascist coalition and the need to reduce the dominance of socialist rhetoric in Berliner Rundfunk broadcasts, the overwhelming influence of Marxist-Leninist doctrine heavily influenced such considerations. Most likely, in considering the commentators already working for the station, “suitable” meant one loyal to the Soviet Union and able to pursue the type of political line advocated by the Soviets, Mahle, and the DVV.

⁷ Secret Report on Radio Berlin, September 1947, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), ICD, Records of the Radio Branch, (390/42/21/3), Box 304.

⁸ “Protokoll, Abteilung Kulturelle Aufklärung,” September 30, 1946, Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde (BAB), DR 2/629, 16-17.

⁹ Ibid., “Herr Mahle erwiderte, dass dies auf grosse Schwierigkeiten stösst und bisher noch keine geeignete Persönlichkeit gefunden werden konnte.”

¹⁰ Intendantenkonferenz Aktennotiz, March 25, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Intendanten, F 201-00-00/0001., 41. “Wenn wir auch kein marxistischer Sender sind, so werden wir diesen Gedanken doch herausstellen und die Lehre des Marxismus mehr als bisher zum Ausdruck bringen müssen.”

By 1947, the station began to give more overt, explicit support of Soviet policies and harshen its criticism of the Western powers. The change was a direct consequence of the Cold War. On March 12, 1947, the President Truman declared unequivocal support for anti-communist movements throughout the world. Specifically citing communist uprisings in Greece and Turkey, Truman pledged US financial support to the governments of both states. On March 14, 1947, Berliner Rundfunk broadcast a news story from the Soviet news agency ISVESTIA that condemned Truman's speech and declared that, like Hitler, the US government was using the threat of communism as an excuse to expand and subjugate free peoples. The report criticized the US for disavowing the UN Security Council by not seeking its help. The chief victim of Truman's new doctrine, the report declared, was the independence and freedom of the Greek people. Greece was giving up one overlord (England) for another (the United States).¹¹ Thus, for Berliner Rundfunk and Soviet news reports alike, the United States had quickly become the new fascist threat previously represented by Nazi Germany. This view became official Soviet policy and was announced in September 1947 when Stalin's spokesman at the newly created Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), Andrei Zhdanov, delivered his "Two Camps" speech. In the speech, Zhdanov declared that the Europe was divided into two hostile and irreconcilable camps, the imperialist, anti-democratic West and the anti-imperialist, democratic Soviet bloc. Communist tactics subsequently became more aggressive throughout Europe.¹²

¹¹ Report from Ilse Nehemias to Charles Lewis, "ISVESTIA Comment on Truman Speech," March 18, 1947, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), ICD, Records of the Radio Branch, (390/42/21/3) Box 304.

¹² Stöver, *Der Kalter Krieg*, 73-74. See as well Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1961*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 64.

Leading Berliner Rundfunk throughout this period was Heinz Schmidt. Schmidt was originally a member of the Social Democratic Party who had eventually turned towards the KPD. Unlike many of the Berliner Rundfunk officials however, Schmidt had spent the war in a western state, Great Britain, where he worked for the Free German Youth journal *Freie Tribüne*.¹³ While in London, he also became friends with members of the British journalist and radio establishments, notably Hugh Carlton-Greene, the guiding force behind Northwest German Radio (NWDR) and later head of the BBC.¹⁴ Upon returning to Germany in 1946, he became Chief Editor and then Intendant of Berliner Rundfunk, serving until 1949. Upon becoming head of the station, Schmidt set about hiring a staff of experienced journalists, mostly from stations in the American and British Zones. Not all of the members of Schmidt's group were committed communists or members of the SED. Many were professional radio journalists who had worked with various stations such as NWDR and the BBC's German service. Most had communist sympathies however. They included Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler and Herbert Gessner from NWDR and Radio Munich respectively. Schmidt also hired fellow communists who had lived in western states like himself, such as Bruno Goldhammer and Leo Bauer, for administrative purposes.¹⁵

Of these new reporters, von Schnitzler and Gessner were particularly significant. Their biographies lacked the benchmarks that typically characterized the lives of many of their Berliner Rundfunk associates. Neither had been a member of the German Communist Party, and both spent the war as a soldier in the German army. Born in 1918,

¹³ Christoph Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 378.

¹⁴ *Erinnerungen sozialistischer Rundfunkpioniere: Ausgewählte Erlebnisberichte*, (Staatliches Komitee für Rundfunk beim Ministerrat der DDR, 1985), 97.

¹⁵ Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 194.

von Schnitzler had initially gone to medical school. In 1944 he was captured by the British and incarcerated in a British POW camp. Like Schmidt, (and future RIAS Program Director Eberhard Schütz), he was recruited by the British to work for the BBC's German Service and subsequently returned to Germany as a correspondent for NWDR. It is not clear when he turned to socialism, but by 1947 his communist sympathies were so great that the British dismissed him from his post. Moving to Berlin in 1948 he subsequently joined the SED and began a long career as a radio journalist in the service of the GDR that lasted until 1989. Gessner also served in the German army, but deserted in 1944. In 1945 he became a chief commentator for Radio Munich, the US sponsored station in Bavaria. In 1947 he left Radio Munich and began working for Berliner Rundfunk, joining the SED in 1948. He retired from radio work in 1955 and died a year later.¹⁶

Throughout the Berlin blockade and airlift, Berliner Rundfunk presented a consistent explanatory narrative that mixed criticism of American policies with German nationalist sentiments. The primary theme of these broadcasts was that the Berlin blockade was an act of self defense aimed to protect German unity and independence. The reports argued that the primary threat to German freedom was the Marshall Plan and the introduction of a new Deutschmark into the American and British Zones. In March of 1948, Hans Mahle instructed the stations throughout the Soviet Zone to present the Marshall Plan as the primary threat to German freedom, democracy, and independence.¹⁷ Mahle recommended that the stations focus on refuting US claims that the plan would help Germany. Instead, Mahle ordered radio stations to demonstrate how the plan

¹⁶ Ibid., 373-77

¹⁷ Intendantenkonferenz Aktennotiz, March 25, 1948, 33.

exploited the German economy and lay the groundwork for making Germany into a colony of the United States.¹⁸ Reporters, Mahle argued, needed to present listeners with a choice: either embrace an economic system of peace that would increase industrial output and improve the standard of living for the German people, or follow the Marshall Plan, which would lead to constant economic crises, unemployment, and the transformation of Germany into a semi-colony under the rule of corporations.¹⁹ SBZ stations needed to broadcast stories about the economic deprivations of western states, and Mahle specifically singled out blacks living in the southern United States as an example of poor individuals forced to rely on charity. Thus, Mahle warned, the Marshall Plan threatened to transform Germany into another version of the American south. Such a wave of charity (which Mahle argued was a condescending method of robbing Germany of her independence) crippled chances for German unity and freedom.²⁰

Mahle's arguments would appear throughout Berliner Rundfunk's broadcasts during 1948 and 1949. The guidelines are interesting, as they lay the groundwork for East German political broadcasts throughout the 1950s. Mahle's stress on German unity is particularly important. Throughout the 1950s, GDR stations contended that East Germany was the true Germany because it, unlike West Germany, was dedicated to uniting Germany rather than accept division. Thus, one can already see, over a year before the founding of the German Democratic Republic, the attempt to link German Communism with German nationalism.²¹ With Mahle's warning that the Marshall Plan would transform Germany into a colony of the United States and his suggestion that both

¹⁸ Ibid., "Halbkolonie."

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ For German communist efforts to forge a nationalist political culture in the GDR, see Sigrid Meuschel's seminal work, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft: Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR, 1945-1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).

the German people and American blacks were victims of America's so-called "charity," Mahle recommended SBZ stations present a curious iteration of Marxism-Leninism that drew upon German nationalist sentiments and attitudes. The offensive against the Marshall Plan was linked with Germany unity. Germany would either be a united, peaceful, disarmed, and economically productive state, or it would become a divided, colony of American capitalism.

Another critical precedent established by Mahle's guidelines (and the subsequent SBZ broadcasts) was the story of self-defense. As discussed in Chapter One, Berliner Rundfunk's initial political broadcasts were imbued with confidence and optimism. The Soviet victory, Nuremberg Trials, and creation of the SED were all evidence that Germany was being reborn as a new, progressive, antifascist state that was now shorn of its imperialist and militarist elements. Yet, by turning to a narrative that focused on creating a siege mentality, GDR broadcasters found themselves attempting to legitimize Soviet and SED actions by characterizing their economic and political situation as fragile and tenuous. As Sigrid Meuschel has pointed out, East German state's attempts to establish legitimacy were usually grounded in an attempt to evoke a sense of fear within its population.²² Even before the founding of the GDR in the fall of 1949, SBZ broadcasters attempted to evoke fear of the west, fear of capitalism, and fear of the United States. This narrative of self-defense and a state of siege would be one of the dominant elements of East German broadcasting throughout the following decade, and would reach a culmination with the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Its origins can be seen here in 1948.

²² Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft*, 15-22.

An example of how Berliner Rundfunk depicted the United States as a resurgent fascist threat is a commentary made by Alfred Duchrow in April 1948. In it, Duchrow related to listeners how he first learned of Franklin Roosevelt's death while still in a concentration camp. "The executioners exulted: they abandoned themselves to the hope that there would be a great change in the course of the war, they fantasized about an alliance of the western states with Himmler and Hitler against the Soviet Union. We know, that the SS men were deceiving themselves."²³ Duchrow's opening, drawing on the image of the camp experience shared by so many fellow victims of the Nazis, characterized the notion that the Western Allies would ally against the Soviets to be the fantastical delusion of despondent, drunken men. Yet, Duchrow continued by pointing out that the Marshall Plan and rule of monopoly capital had made the three Western Zones into a safe haven for Nazis fleeing the SBZ.²⁴ The dichotomy and continuities can clearly be seen in Duchrow's broadcast. The three Western Zones (The Trizone) were sanctuaries for fascists and reactionaries because of the developments of the Marshall Plan, Thus, the United States was forming the anti-Soviet alliance between the US and German fascists proposed by the SS guards in Duchrow's camp. The SS soldiers, Duchrow contended, were not as foolish as observers had thought.

Two commentaries sent on July 2 and July 8 1948 respectively present a good overview of the major themes presented by Berliner Rundfunk during the period of the

²³ Sendemanuskript, "Tageskommentar/Europarat und Marshall Charta." April 17, 1948, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-01/0122. "Die Henker frohlockten; sie gaben sich der letzten Hoffnung auf die grosse Wendung des Krieges hin, sie phantasierten von einem Bündnis der Weststaaten mit Himmler und Hitler gegen die Sowjetunion. Wir wissen, das sich damals die SS-Leute getäuscht haben."

²⁴ Ibid. "Und wie ist es heute? Ich hatte in den letzten Tagen Gelegenheit, mit Antifaschististen aus den Westzonen zu sprechen, Vertretern der fortschrittlichen Minderheit in der trizonalen Verwaltung und in den Spruchkammern, Mitgliedern von Wohnungskommissionen z.B. Die erzählten mir übereinstimmend, dass es jetzt drüben von Dirketoren und Naziaktivisten wimmelt, die erst in den letzten Monaten aus Berlin und der Ostzone hinübergekommen sind, weil sie von der Durchführung des MarshallPlanes die Stabilisierung des Monopolkapitalismus und ersehnte die Freiheit für ihrer reaktionären oder faschistischen Bestrebungen erhoffen."

blockade and airlift. Both were sent just weeks before the Soviet ordered West Berlin blockaded and the Western Allies had commenced with the airlift. The first commentary, written by Duchrow, focused on the financial and economic threat of the Marshall Plan and Deutsch Mark. The Marshall Plan was described as a plan for mass plunder launched by “international financiers.” The “Frankfurter Clay Mark,” as Duchrow described it, (stressing its connections to both US Military Governor Lucius Clay and German statesmen in the Western Zones), was part of an attempt to divide Germany and destroy the economy of Berlin and the Eastern Zone. The commentary was also strongly nationalistic. Against “international finance,” true Germans needed to preserve German unity. Yet, the western powers were transforming Germany into a protectorate.

Duchrow contended that the Saar was to become a French province and the Ruhr was to remain under Western control. German unity was to be broken by the division of the country into federal states. The western claims of creating a democracy in Germany was merely, in Duchrow’s words, a “façade for the dictatorship of the dollar,” and national enslavement.

Eduard von Schnitzler’s commentary from July 8 1948 is another good example of the type of broadcasts sent to defend the blockade. Although his July 8 commentary was concerned with the blockade, von Schnitzler opened by asking his listeners if recent events reminded them of World War II, asking, “Haven’t the past days reminded you of the war? The drone of engines, provisions coming from the air, the siege mentality, the feeling of hunger?”²⁵ Von Schnitzler then proceeded to condemn the Western press for

²⁵ Sendemanuskript, “Die Westmark eine Messe wert,” July 8, 1948, Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-01/0322. “„Fühlen Sie nicht auch in den letzten Tagen an den Krieg erinnert? Das Motorengedröhn der ehemaligen Bombenflugzeuge, das Gerede von Frontstadt, Luftversorgung, Belagerung, Aushungerung?”

fanning the flames of hostility and war. The newspapers, von Schnitzler argued, had alternated between condemning the East, praising the need for the Deutschmark, and calling for the use of Atomic Weapons to pave a path through the Soviet Zone to West Berlin.²⁶ Schnitzler then noted that all signs showed that the Western Allies' policies were failing. The Deutschmark, which von Schnitzler noted had been described by one West Berlin newspaper as "worth a mass," was now worth a "requiem." The airlift could not possibly work and was being used as a means of reducing the loss of prestige that would occur with the inevitable withdrawal of western troops from Berlin.²⁷ These troops, von Schnitzler contended, were superfluous and increased the threat of war breaking out.

The commentaries just described are only two of thousands of broadcasts made throughout the blockade by Berliner Rundfunk. However, their central arguments could be heard in most other Berliner Rundfunk political broadcasts concerning the Berlin blockade. The western powers, under US leadership, were using the Marshall Plan and Deutschmark to divide Germany and make it a protectorate of international finance and capital. The Germans of the Eastern Zone were the true German nationalists, struggling to preserve German unity and independence as well as prevent the outbreak of a Third World War. The blockade was consequently an act of self-defense and self-preservation designed to save Germany as a nation. Although Stalin himself had described the blockade as an act of self-defense,²⁸ it was East German commentators who coupled the action to the language of German unity and national integrity.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 48.

Along with confronting the threat of economic division, many broadcasts focused on Germany's immediate past. Von Schitzler's description of droning engines and a siege mentality was clearly aimed at evoking these memories. On October 1, 1948 Herbert Gessner made a similar comment, noting that the sound of the anglo-american bombers was just like that of the planes in 1944.²⁹ These were not the only instances in which Berliner Rundfunk attempted to draw a connection between the Nazis and the Americans. In many broadcasts, the British and American sponsored media were seen as the successor of Joseph Goebbels. In July, the western press was described as "Braggarts of the airlift." The commentator noted that the last "Braggart" of the Nazi era, Goebbels, avoided responsibility for his actions by taking his own life. The speaker then asked how the current incarnation of war-agitators would pay for their actions.³⁰ The station also attacked western reports favorable to the airlift by claiming that their constant coverage of how many tons of material was delivered each day was akin to Goebbel's reports of how many tons of British shipping was sunk by German Submarines during World War II.³¹ In June of 1948, referencing a Voice of America broadcast, commentator Hans Hagen continued to make connections, declaring, "The same melody: the Russians are all guilty, declared the Voice of America today. It is just as Goebbels sang his song yesterday: the Jews are all guilty."³² The Russians had become the new Jews to the resurgent fascists in the United States.

²⁹ Sendemanuskript, "Hundert Tage Luftbrücke," October 1, 1948, Herbert Gessner, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-01/0177.

³⁰ Sendemanuskript, "Maulhelden auf Luftbrücken," July 20, 1948, Hans Hagen, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-02/0088.

³¹ Sendemanuskript, "Tonnage-Manöver," February 9, 1949, Hans Hagen, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-03-01/0012.

³² Sendemanuskripte, "Ferngelenkte Pleite JEIA," Hans Hagen, June 29, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-02/0069.

As Christoph Classen has noted, Berliner Rundfunk's attempts to evoke the memory of the allied bombings and memory of war failed to convince listeners to look beyond the fact that of the two sides of the dispute, it was the Soviets acting as the aggressor.³³ The Soviet contention that the United States was pursuing a plan to divide and subjugate Germany does not accord with either the actions and goals of either the Truman Administration or those West European leaders who requested that the United States maintain its presence in Western Europe and eagerly accepted the much needed aid of the Marshall Plan. Certainly, US actions during this period, such as the declaration of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, had increased tensions between the West and the Soviets. Furthermore, both the US and British had begun to openly favor the creation of a West German state beginning as early as 1946. But Berliner Rundfunk's presentation of the international situation ignored the Soviet decision to unilaterally govern its own Zone, did not consider the curtailment of political and civil liberties in the SBZ, and did not address the Soviets' own consolidation of control over Eastern Europe.³⁴ Furthermore, it simplified the situation. In the scope of a series of brief commentaries, this was perhaps inevitable. Yet, the monothematic approach to all of Berliner Rundfunk's commentaries, regardless of their authors, usually led to an overly simplified view of events.

Von Schnitzler's bold prediction that the airlift could not possibly work also became a liability for Berliner Rundfunk. In the summer of 1948, Berliner Rundfunk

³³ Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 240.

³⁴ For work on the origins of the Cold War and the division of Germany, see Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, Stöver, *Der Kalter Krieg*, Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, the Division of Germany, and the Origins of the Cold War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), John Lewis Gaddis, "Dividing the World" in *We Now Know*, Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Stanley Hoffmann and Charles Maier, eds, *The Marshall Plan: A Retrospective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984).

commentaries had openly declared that it was not possible to provide for all of West Berlin using only air transportation. As it became clear by the spring of 1949 that the airlift had been a success, the tone of this critique turned to ridicule. In von Schnitzler's lengthy commentary from July 4, 1948, for example, he noted that while the airlift could provide food, it was neglecting to bring raw materials for Berlin's industry. Von Schnitzler then asked, "And how long do you think that the American and British and French tax payers are prepared to pay these mad costs?"³⁵ On July 9, 1948, Alfred Duchrow's commentary continued to describe the airlift as impossible and at the same time cast Berliner's memories back to another event: the difficult winters of 1945-46 and 1947-48. He noted that residents in East Berlin's Pankow district were already hard at work chopping down wood to their homes during the coming winter. He then proceeded to note that, "the dream of supplying coal from the air is over."³⁶ The airlift was "fantastic" and only a fool living, "in cloud cuckoo land" would consider it an adequate solution.³⁷ On August 18, Arthur Mannbar focused on the lack of supplies in West Berlin. "In the western sectors there are around 952,000 households. If every West Berliner family consumes a hundredth weight (50 kilograms,) of coal, aircraft must bring in 47,600 metric tons of coal. Bear in mind that is only for heating purposes in the Western Sectors. Therefore, from now on every aircraft must bring to Berlin nothing but coal for 25 days. No food, only coal, if every family is to receive a hundredth weight."³⁸

³⁵ Sendemanuskripte, "Berliner Krise—menschlich gesehen," Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler, July 4, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-01/0308.

³⁶ Sendemanuskripte, Kommentar, Alfred Duchrow, July 9, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-01/0388. „Der Traum von der Kohlenversorgung aus der Luft ist ausgeträumt.“

³⁷ Ibid. „Ein Narr ist, wer sich sein Wolkenkuksheim am zerfließenden Rande einer fantastischen Luftbrücke baut.“

³⁸ Sendemanuskripte, "Berliner Kommentar," Arthur Mannbar, August 18, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-03/0033. "In den Westsektoren gibt es, rund gesagt 952,000 Haushalte. Wenn also jede West-berliner Familie in den Genuss von nur einem Zentner Kohlen kommen sollte, müssten 47,600 t Kohlen in Flugzeugen hergebracht werden. Wohlgemerkt: nur für Husbrandszwecke in den Westsektoren, d.h. also: alle jetzt

Mannbar stressed the shortages and claimed that the Western Allies would never be able to provide enough supplies. In fact, the Western Allies were concerned during the summer of 1948 about the coming winter. The airlift was providing about 3,000 to 4,000 tons of material a day, indeed less than needed for the coming winter.³⁹ Yet the Berliner Rundfunk strategy of demoralizing its audience was a curious way of attracting listeners. An anonymous letter sent to RIAS in August, 1948, noted that, "The program of Radio Berlin, however, is really shattering the nerves."⁴⁰ Many other letters to the station complained of the malnutrition and hunger many were suffering. It is important to note that residents in the Soviet Zone, which was supposed to be fully provisioned, wrote many of these letters.⁴¹

By presenting broadcasts of this nature, Berliner Rundfunk had also linked its very credibility to the airlift failing. Thus, the change in tone and emphasis that marked its broadcasts during the winter of 1948-49, as it became clear the airlift would succeed, is not surprising. By the winter of 1949, the airlift was shipping between 5,000 and 6,000 tons of supplies to West Berlin a day. Berliner Rundfunk subsequently began to either disparage the airlift or ignore it altogether. On December 12, 1948, the station broadcast a commentary discussing the major events and accomplishments of 1948. It stressed the successes of the communist states in Eastern Europe such as the rise of socialist unity parties in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Poland.⁴² It also touched on the

eingesetzten Flugzeuge der Luftbrücke müssten 25 Tage lang keine Lebensmittel, sondern nur Kohlen nach Berlin bringen, wenn jede Familie einen Zentner bekommen soll."

³⁹ Large, *Berlin*, 408.

⁴⁰ Anon. Letter to RIAS, August 1948, NARA, RG 260, (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director's Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 20. This and other letters to RIAS were translated by RIAS officials.

⁴¹ See the files Letters to RIAS in NARA OMGUS, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director's Office, General Records, 1945-1949 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 20.

⁴² Sendemanuskripte, "Aussenpolitische Jahresübersicht," Peter Schäfer, December 12, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-02/0122.

Soviet Union's economic growth and stressed climbing jobless rates in France, Italy, and the United States. The commentary also described the success of communists in Malaya, Greece, and China.⁴³ The broadcast was a thorough and detailed analysis of the major events in the world over the course of 1948. Yet, the blockade and airlift were hardly mentioned at all. For Berliners listening to the station, this absence would have been a noticeable lacuna. When British Prime Minister Clement Atlee visited West Berlin in March 1949, he described the airlift as a wonder of the world. Berliner Rundfunk latched onto this phrase, and in a broadcast from March 12, 1949 sarcastically declared, "Thus, one will learn in school in a later period, 'Outside of the seven wonders of the ancient world there is an eighth: the airlift. Made in the USA.'"⁴⁴ The use of the phrase "Made in the USA," further stressed the supposed link between capitalism and the airlift.

Berliner Rundfunk freely cited the western press to make its arguments. The most open confrontation with the western media was in a program called *Blick in die Weltpresse*. The program focused on the major stories from a variety of newspapers, the majority of which were pro-communist. However, the program always featured non-communist periodicals such as *Le Monde*, *News Chronicle*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*. The selection of excerpts and stories was almost always made with the intent of undermining the Western Allies and the United States. Often, the original meaning of these quotations was taken out of context. For example, an excerpt from a November 1948 story from *Newsweek* was read over the air and paraphrased to undermine the airlift. The program quoted airlift pilots complaining about the fatigue from flying so many

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Sendemanuskripte, Hans Dilssner, March 12, 1949, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-01/0538. "Man wird also in späterer Zeit in der Schule lehren: 'Ausser den sieben altertümlichen Weltwundern gibt es noch ein Aches.—Die Luftbrücke. Made in USA.' "

missions for the “madcap” airlift and having to sacrifice themselves for the “pigs in Berlin.”⁴⁵ Although pilots likely complained about the operation, Berliner Rundfunk declared they represented the opinion of all pilots flying the airlift.⁴⁶ This also fell in line with Berliner Rundfunk’s frequently made contention that most Americans cared little for the German people and were growing tired of the exorbitant cost of funding the operation.⁴⁷

Inevitably, no matter what newspapers were discussed on a particular program of *Blick in die Weltpresse*, a story from *The New York Herald Tribune* was featured. Usually, the story was by the columnist Walter Lippmann. As a politically moderate critic of the Truman administration’s foreign policy, Lippmann provided Berliner Rundfunk with the chance to demonstrate that not only communists opposed US foreign policy. Lippmann’s columns were often read over the air throughout the blockade and usually dwelt on the columnist’s own criticisms of the Truman administration and the policy of containment. For example, in August 1948 Herbert Gessner, asked:

And what does it say about the situation that Walter Lippmann, the most influential American journalist, and above all a right-wing journalist, made the following prognosis concerning General Clay’s bankrupt Berlin policy on July 28 in the *New York Herald Tribune*? “Perhaps our predicament in Berlin, and the hair-raising methods that are needed to extricate ourselves from this predicament, will finally convince Secretary of State Marshall that he cannot make policy in Europe as long as he allows the military in Berlin to make their own German policy.” That sentence does not come from Berliner Rundfunk, but in fact is taken literally from criticism made

⁴⁵ Sendemanuskripte, “Blick in die Weltpresse,” Peter Schäfer, December 1, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-02/0147.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sendemanuskripte, Kommentar, Alfred Duchrow, July 9, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-01/0388.

by the Republican Walter Lippmann of General Clay's policies.⁴⁸

This excerpt from Herbert Gessner's August 1948 commentary reveals an important component of Berliner Rundfunk's approach to the US media. By stressing that Lippmann was supposedly a right-wing journalist (he was not) and that it was Lippmann, not Berliner Rundfunk, who was making these criticisms, the station hoped to characterize the US government as out of touch and isolated from the rest of the world. Yet, it also greatly simplified Lippmann's politics. For although Lippmann opposed the escalation of tensions between the US and Soviets, and felt that supporting the creation of a West German state was increasing these tensions, he supported the airlift, feeling that the Western Allies could not be forced to withdraw from Berlin through intimidation.⁴⁹ Lippmann's criticism of the Truman Administration was not based on ideology but on a sense that the tactics and approaches taken by the President and Secretary of State were only exacerbating an already tense situation.⁵⁰ However, such a nuanced approach to the major issues of the day was not particularly helpful for the arguments Berliner Rundfunk was trying to make.

Another popular subject of Berliner Rundfunk's commentaries was Franklin Roosevelt's former vice-president Henry Wallace, who had briefly served in the Truman administration as Secretary of Commerce. In 1948, he ran for president on the ticket of the Progressive Party. Belonging to the political traditions of leftwing American

⁴⁸ Sendemanuskripte, "Falschmünzerpolitik der Westmächte in Berlin," Herbert Gessner, August 13, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-01/0403.

⁴⁹ Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, (Boston: Atlantic Monthly, 1980), 453.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 486.

liberalism, Wallace's campaign was pulled increasingly leftward to such an extent that his speeches came to sound like the Soviets' own arguments. This was a consequence of both the prevalence of communists within the Progressive Party and Wallace's own naiveté.⁵¹ His speeches and pronouncements bore a strong resemblance to the rhetoric and arguments of the Soviets and Berliner Rundfunk. Like Berliner Rundfunk, and Soviet backed media in general, he spoke of the " 'Truman-led, Wall Street-dominated military backed group that is blackening the name of American democracy around the world.'"⁵² He denounced the Marshall Plan as tool of "Wall Street monopolists," a means of dividing Europe into separate camps, and a tool for subverting the economic independence of Britain, France, and Italy, forcing them to abandon their policies of industrial nationalization.⁵³

The station depicted Wallace as the one progressive force in the United States, casting him as a symbol of the old policy of US-Soviet friendship of the Roosevelt era destroyed by Truman and Marshall. On October 6, 1948, the editor Hermann Budziskawski broadcast a portrait of the American candidate. He opened by describing Wallace as young, viral, and athletic. His background as a farmer and friendship with Roosevelt were also stressed. "Not only was Wallace Roosevelt's closest political associate, but he was also a close personal friend, and he helped President Roosevelt's efforts to make the Democratic party independent of big capital and corruption, and make it a true American people's party."⁵⁴ Budziskawski claimed Wallace's setbacks and lack

⁵¹ For an overview of Wallace's foreign policy see J. Samuel Walker, *Henry Wallace and American Foreign Policy*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976). For the election of 1948, see Walker, Chapter 13, "Year of Defeat: 1948," 183-205.

⁵² Taken from a speech given by Wallace in Milwaukee, December 30, 1947, quoted by Walker, 184-185.

⁵³ Walker, *Henry Wallace and American Foreign Policy*, 185.

⁵⁴ Sendemanuskripte, "Henry Wallace," Hermann Budziskawski, October 6, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B204-02-02/0223. "Wallace war nicht nur Roosevelts engster politischer Mitarbeiter, er war ein

of publicity in the 1948 election were the consequence of the fact that the two US political parties were both slaves to big capital and were preventing Wallace's voice from being heard. "The reactionary feudal lords of the Southern States have, with Truman's help, quickly bought control of the Democratic Party." Thus, the democrats were no different than the reactionary Republican Party.⁵⁵ The report stressed that Wallace was not a socialist or a communist, declaring:

Henry Wallace, who is not the dreamer his opponents allege he is, is becoming the focal point for all the progressive forces in the country. He has entered the election race without occupying a party machine and he knows that he can hardly hope to win more than a couple million votes. However, he is also conscious of the fact that he is fulfilling a great historical mission in which he will finally bring together what monopoly capital opposes. After the election his new party will continue to grow and become a powerful factor in the struggle for international peace and will help break of the power of the monopolies in America.⁵⁶

Throughout the United States presidential election campaign of 1948, Berliner Rundfunk aired frequent comments made by Wallace in which he criticized Truman and Clay. On July 31, 1948 the station broadcast long excerpts, verbatim (though translated) of

naher persönlicher Freund, und er halt Präsident Roosevelt, bei dessen Versuch, aus der korrupten, vom Großkapital abhängigen, demokratischen Partei, eine Art amerikanischer Volkspartei zu machen."

⁵⁵ Ibid., „Die reaktionären Feudalherren der Südstaaten eroberten, mit Präsident Truman's Hilfe, sehr schnell die Macht der demokratischen Partei, die sich seitdem nicht mehr wesentlich von der alten reaktionären republikanischen Partei unterscheidet.“

⁵⁶ Ibid., "Henry Wallace, der keineswegs, wie seine Gegner behaupten, ein Träumer ist, ist der Kristallisationspunkt aller fortschrittlichen Kräfte des Landes geworden. Er ist in den Wahlkampf gegangen, ohne Parteimaschine zu besitzen, und er weiß, daß er kaum mehr als ein paar millionen Stimmen erhoffen kann. Er ist sich aber auch bewußt, daß er eine große historische Mission erfüllt, indem er endlich die Kräfte zusammenfaßt, die sich dem Monopolkapital entgegenstellen wollen, und daß seine neue Partei nach den Wahlen weiter wachsen wird und ein mächtiger Faktor werden kann und werden muß im Kampf für internationalen Frieden und zur Brechnung der Monopolherrschaft im Innern Amerikas."

Wallace's acceptance speech at the Progressive Party nominating convention in Philadelphia seven days earlier. Notable sections included a call for a more isolationist policy, as Wallace declared: "I say the peace of the world is far too fragile to be shuttled back and forth through a narrow air corridor in freighter planes. I say the lives of our children, and our children's parents, are far too precious to be left to the tempers of second lieutenants at road barriers where zone meets zone-or to the generals who are quoted calmly as favoring a "show of strength."⁵⁷ The arguments were very similar to those made by Berliner Rundfunk: the airlift was a dangerous act of brinkmanship that was threatening world stability and was not in the interest of the United States.

Through its frequent quotation Wallace and Lippmann, Berliner Rundfunk utilized a technique that has been described by Jeffrey Herf as "asymmetrical strategic interaction."⁵⁸ By exploiting the open debate of liberal democratic societies as a means of gaining strategic advantage, Berliner Rundfunk hoped to transform those virtues in vices. Berliner Rundfunk's staff also drew the conclusion that the best means for pursuing the station's goals was to engage, confront, and refute the arguments being made by the western press. However, SED leaders considered the very act of acknowledging that there was another side to an argument to be an unacceptable compromise. In October 1949, Schmidt and 16 of his co-workers at the station were dismissed.

⁵⁷ Sendemanuscripte, "Außenpolitik Wochenübersicht." Peter Schäfer, July 31, 1948, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 204-02-02/0100. "Ich erkläre, daß der Friede zu zerbrechlich ist, um in Transportflugzeugen durch einen engen Luftkorridor hin und her geschoben zu werden. Ich sage, daß das Leben unserer Kinder und das Leben der Eltern unserer Kinder viel zu wertvoll ist, um von der Stimmung kleiner Leutnants an Straßensperren zwischen Zonen anhängig zu sein, oder von Generälen, die kaltblütige Erklärungen über die Notwendigkeit kriegischer Demonstrationen abgeben." The original text of the speech can be found at the website of the Truman Presidential Library and Museum. See Henry Wallace, "My Commitments: Betrayal By Old Parties," Progressive Party Candidate for President of the United States, Acceptance Speech, Philadelphia, Pa., July 24, 1948." Truman Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/>.

⁵⁸ Jeffrey Herf, *War by Other Means: Soviet Power, West German Resistance, and the Battle of the Euromissiles* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 9-12.

By the fall of 1949, it was clear that Berliner Rundfunk had failed in the competition with western radio in presenting a credible, convincing program. At the same time, the failure of the blockade the previous spring had dealt a considerable blow to the Soviet Union's position and authority in Germany. In the same month that Schmidt was removed from his post, the Soviets had also sanctioned the creation of the SED controlled German Democratic Republic.

Spearheading the efforts to purge GDR broadcasters were Kurt Heiss and Gerhart Eisler. Both would become prominent figures in East German broadcasting throughout the 1950s. Born in 1909, Heiss had worked as a journalist for German communist newspapers during the Weimar period. He fled to France in 1933. In 1935, he moved to Moscow where he worked for "Radio Moscow." He remained there until 1947. Upon returning to Germany that year, he worked as a political broadcaster at Berliner Rundfunk. After a brief period as Intendant of Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk (MDR), he returned to Berliner Rundfunk to act as the new Intendant of both that station and Deutschlandradio. In 1952 he replaced Hans Mahle as General Intendant and became chairmain of the State Radio Committee in 1959, serving as chair until leaving to work as editor for the *Ostsee Zeitung* in 1961.⁵⁹

Born in 1897, Eisler would become one of the dominant figures in East German radio throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Gerhart had joined the KPD in 1921. He fled Germany after the Nazi seizure of power, living in the United States and France, serving in the Spanish Civil War, and eventually returning to the United States in 1941. As a prominent communist and representative of the Communist International living in New York, Eisler quickly came under the suspicion of the House Un-American Activities

⁵⁹ Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 373.

Committee. Facing conviction for perjury, Eisler stowed away aboard a Polish ship in May of 1949 and fled to the GDR. Greeted as a hero upon returning to Germany, the SED quickly gave him a post as the head of the Office for Information in the newly created GDR. He remained at this post until he was dismissed in 1952 due to his association with purged SED member Paul Merker. The SED allowed him to return to work in 1956, when he became deputy chair of the State Radio Committee (StRK). From 1962 until his death 1968 he would serve as chair of the committee.⁶⁰

Gerhart Eisler's criticism of Schmidt's management of Berliner Rundfunk focused on the Intendant's supposed pursuit of objective journalism. In November of 1949, Eisler declared that, "If it is said that it is necessary to accommodate enemy propaganda in order to be objective, then we are of the opinion that one must not hear all sides. We are of the opinion, that our side is right."⁶¹ There was only one side: the arguments of the Socialist Unity Party and Soviet Union. The comment was made about a month after the SED held a lengthy meeting discussing the need to dismiss Schmidt and reprimand most of his staff at Berliner Rundfunk on October 30, 1949. The meeting was attended by the most important figures in East German broadcasting, including General Intendant Hans Mahle, Heiss, Eisler, Schmidt, Leo Bauer, Bruno Goldhammer, Alfred Duchrow, Herbert Geßner, and Hermann Axen. It shows the initial steps taken by the SED to consolidate and assert party control over all broadcasting operations in the newly created German Democratic Republic. The process, begun in the fall of 1949, lasted until 1952 and ended with the complete consolidation of broadcasting operations under SED control in East Berlin. Examining these meeting minutes also allow us to examine many

⁶⁰ See Epstein's examination of Eisler in *The Last Revolutionaries*. See as well Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 272.

⁶¹ "Intendanten-Tagung am 21. und 22. November 1949." Quoted by Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 196.

fundamental positions held by the SED with regards to the relationship between radio, the public, and objectivity.

The primary problem facing Berliner Rundfunk, according to Radio General Intendant Hans Mahle, was that its broadcasts were ideologically weak. Schmidt suffered due to the fact that he had lived in England during the war. The station as a whole was in a precarious position due to the fact that its facilities were physically within the British Sector of Berlin. Mahle declared, “Evidently, under the influence of class enemies in the British sector, Berliner Rundfunk has developed a propensity, indeed, a love, for fruitless polemics with the West Berlin and West German press and journalists.”⁶² Mahle asserted that Schmidt had allowed his wish to refute the reports of the western media to supersede his true responsibility: to present the correct socialist, antifascist course for Germany to Berliner Rundfunk’s listeners. The station’s reporters, Mahle observed, cared more about West German, British, and American broadcasts than they did the Soviet’s own arguments. Like Eisler, Mahle belittled Schmidt’s attempt to be “objective.” “The situation at Berliner Rundfunk is marked by an injurious propensity towards so-called objectivity, which—I would like to say, often finds its expression in Berliner Rundfunk broadcasts in a downright loving and literal citation of the aspersions and contortions of the class enemies.”⁶³ Mahle characterized the desire to be objective as a sickness and

⁶² *Stenographische Niederschrift über die Sitzung des erweiterten Parteiakts der SED Betriebsgruppe im Berliner Rundfunk am 30.10.1949*, BAB, Konferenzen und Beratungen der SED, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO), DY 30/IV2/1.01/125., 3. “Offenbar unter dem Einfluß des Klassenegners im britischen Sektor hat sich im Berliner Rundfunk ein Hang, ja, ich möchte sagen, eine Liebe zur fruchtlosen Polemik mit der Westberliner und der Westdeutschen Presse-Journalien entwickelt.”

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4. “...wird die Lage im Berliner Rundfunk gekennzeichnet durch einen absolut schädlichen Hang zur sogenannten Objektivität, der seinen Ausdruck findet—ich möchte sagen—oft geradezu in einer liebevollen Pflege und wörtlichen Zitierung der Verleumdungen und Verdrehungen des Klassenegners in den Sendungen des Berliner Rundfunks.”

contended that it represented a failure to embrace and promote the principles of socialism. The two were not compatible.⁶⁴

As one can see from Mahle's comments, the fact that Berliner Rundfunk was geographically *inside* the British Sector in Berlin-Charlottenburg was of considerable concern to the SED. Towards the end of the meeting, Kurt Heiss described the station as an advanced post in enemy territory.⁶⁵ Because of this, Heiss argued, it was imperative that the station's reporters present an ideologically clear line in their broadcasts and that party influence should be strong and pervasive. This was a clear change in course from earlier efforts to downplay the partisan character of the station. Mahle described Schmidt as arrogant, and declared that his arrogance ("überheblichkeit") had hindered station operations and led him to avoid a frank, critical self-assessment that could have improved the station's broadcasts.⁶⁶ Schmidt had also failed to install an effective means of collective leadership.

Mahle also criticized Schmidt's subordinates, such as Bruno Goldhammer, commenting that he was responsible for Berliner Rundfunk's lack of ideological clarity. The criticism of Goldhammer is telling, as he was among several members of the SED purged due to his connections with the SED Politbüro member Paul Merker.⁶⁷ (Ironically, as noted above, Eisler himself would pay for his association with Merker in 1952). The expulsion of Goldhammer and his colleague, Deutschlandsender chief Leo Bauer, from the party in 1950 was part of a larger scale anti-cosmopolitan action waged

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 111. "Mitten im englischen Sektor ist er eine Insel, ein vorgeschobener Posten im feindlichen Land."

⁶⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁷ For a good analysis of the anti-cosmopolitan purges in East Germany, see Herf, *Divided Memory*, 112-116, Thomas Klein, "Für die Einheit und Reinheit der Partei:" *Die innerparteilichen Kontrollorgane der SED in der Ära Ulbricht*, (Böhlau: Cologne, 2002), Ulrich Mählert, " 'Die Partei hat immer recht!' " *Parteisäuberungen als Kaderpolitik in der SED (1948-1953)* in Hermann Weber and Ulrich Mählert ed. *Terror. Stalinistische Parteisäuberungen 1936-1953* (Paderborn 1998), 351-458.

by pro-Stalinist officials throughout the Soviet bloc. Both had spent the war years in Switzerland and had worked for Berliner Rundfunk and Deutschlandsender respectively. Authorities arrested Leo Bauer in 1950 and charged him with espionage. Condemned to death in 1952, his sentence was commuted in 1953 to 25 years in a work camp. Goldhammer was arrested on similar charges and sentenced to ten years in prison. In 1956 he was rehabilitated by the SED and subsequently returned to work as a journalist.⁶⁸

In comparison, Schmidt's dismissal as Intendant was a relatively light sentence. No longer allowed to work in broadcasting, he nevertheless continued to work as a journalist in East Germany, eventually becoming a high-ranking member of the National Front.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the language and concerns of the GDR's anti-cosmopolitan campaign can be felt throughout the October 30, 1949 meeting transcript. Along with criticism for communists who had spent the war years in western states, SED leaders criticized Berliner Rundfunk for its ineffective reporting of the trial of Laszlo Rajk. A long-time member of the Hungarian Communist Party, Rajk was put on trial by communist leaders in Hungary for associating with Titoist and western elements. The trial was a critical catalyst for anti-cosmopolitan actions throughout the Eastern Bloc.⁷⁰ Consequently, Berliner Rundfunk's reporting of the trial came under close scrutiny by SED leaders. Hermann Axen, the SED central committee secretary responsible for media matters, accused Schmidt of downplaying the severity of Rajk's crimes by focusing on Rajk's psychological makeup and background as an anti-fascist fighter.⁷¹ Furthermore, the station had made the mistake of describing him as a "capable young man who

⁶⁸ Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 369-375. For the arrest and trial of Leo Bauer, see Klaus Arnold, *Kalter Krieg im Äther: Der Deutschlandsender und die Westpropaganda der DDR* (Münster: LIT Verlag 2002), 253-257.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 377.

⁷⁰ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 179-181.

⁷¹ *Stenographische Niederschrift über die Sitzung des erweiterten Parteiaktivs der SED Betriebsgruppe im Berliner Rundfunk am 30.10.1949*, 14.

struggled against dictatorship.”⁷² Berliner Rundfunk, Axen contended, had tried to argue that Rajk’s struggles and suffering as an antifascist fighter could account for his criminal actions. Thus, Berliner Rundfunk had not adequately condemned his criminality.

The meeting minutes indicate that the session was tense and antagonistic. At one point Heiss admonished Schmidt for speaking out of turn when the former Berliner Rundfunk Intendant protested the accusations being made against him by the SED leadership. At another point, Eisler accused Schmidt of not taking the Politbüro’s recommendations seriously, and mocked Schmidt by asking rhetorically who was right, Schmidt or the Politbüro.⁷³ He characterized Schmidt as a leader incapable of confronting the many challenges of effectively leading a radio station, noting that, “...if a general declares to his troops, there are too many enemies and too many difficulties, then he is a bad general. Consequently, he must go.”⁷⁴ Eisler went on to criticize Schmidt’s staff, including von Schnitzler, and compared the Berliner Rundfunk reporters unfavorably to RIAS. RIAS, Eisler noted, was too smart to broadcast reports that undermined its own position and the position of the West Berlin and West German governments.⁷⁵ He went on to criticize Berliner Rundfunk for trying to model itself on RIAS. It was fine if RIAS wanted to liberally cite stories from the SED organ *Neues Deutschland*. The appropriate response, however, was not for Berliner Rundfunk to just begin citing western newspapers. As Eisler declared, “We must take up the opponent’s arguments. Not to propagate them, but so that we can slash them apart and smash them

⁷² Ibid., 14. “ ‘Ein fähiger junger Mann, der gegen die Diktatur kämpfte.’ ”

⁷³ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 39. “Aber, wenn ein General einer Truppe erklärt, es waren zu viele Feinde und zu viel Schwierigkeiten dort, dann ist es ein schlechter General. Deshalb muß er weggehen.”

⁷⁵ Ibid., 38-39.

with our own arguments.”⁷⁶ It was not Berliner Rundfunk’s job to be the propagandistic mouthpiece for RIAS in the Eastern Zone.

The SED resolved to dismiss Schmidt, enforce collective leadership over Berliner Rundfunk, and make sure that the station only broadcast politically acceptable reports. Despite Mahle and Eisler’s criticisms, Berliner Rundfunk’s reports were hardly objective. Their reports had been dedicated to presenting a single viewpoint, the accepted communist master narrative as sanctioned by the Soviet Union. Broadcasters cited sources like Wallace and Lippmann with the intention of using the quotations to attack western policies in Berlin. Nevertheless, the debates held by Berliner Rundfunk’s staff and SED reveal that tensions frequently emerged between presenting the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of events and attempting to produce reports that were attractive to listeners. The primary means of doing this was to downplay the impression that Berliner Rundfunk only served Soviet interests. By citing Lippmann and Wallace, Berliner Rundfunk attempted to present the argument that the Soviet Union was not the only critic of the Marshall Plan or the airlift, and that liberal elements within the United States were also opposed to the Truman Administration. By late 1949 however, the SED was more concerned about the form of the Berliner Rundfunk broadcasts than their intent or content. By citing western newspapers and arguments, the East German station had given the impression, in the eyes of Heiss, and Eisler, that it was giving the arguments legitimacy and unintentionally giving listeners the opportunity to listen to them. As Eisler argued, it was not enough to present the western viewpoint. The western view needed to be smashed by effective argumentation from Berliner Rundfunk reporters.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 40-41. “Wir müssen die Argumente des Gegners so aufnehmen, daß wir nicht propagieren, sondern daß wir sie zerfetzen und zerschlagen mit unseren Argumenten.”

What is clear from Eisler and Heiss's critical comments is the firm conviction that the Marxist-Leninist approach was the only correct model for journalism. News reports could not just be an end to themselves. But, even more importantly, news reports could not be broadcast solely for the purpose of refuting western propaganda. Their primary focus and goal had to be spreading the correct Communist line to listeners with the intent of encouraging listeners to adopt the ideological worldview of the SED and Soviet Union. In the mindset of Eisler and Heiss, objective reporting was coterminous with western, bourgeois reporting, and consequently not conducive to the construction of a socialist society.

The need to confront western broadcasts would become the primary concern for GDR broadcast news during the early 1950s. Consequently, the dismissal of Schmidt in 1949 represents an important turning point in the history of broadcasting in the German Democratic Republic. The tension between Marxism-Leninism and broad anti-fascism which had shaped the station's reporting since 1945 would be resolved in favor of a style of journalism that fully embraced and promoted Marxist-Leninist principles.

Ending Neutrality: RIAS and the Turn to Anti-communism 1947-1949

Like the Soviets, United States' information policy in Germany was dedicated to insuring that Nazism was purged from German political culture and society.⁷⁷ However,

⁷⁷ Hartenian, *Controlling Information in U.S. Occupied Germany* and Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible*.

unlike the Soviet approach, which called for the active use of the media to shape mentalities, the US initially pursued a policy that aimed to introduce a culture of journalism and radio that respected neutrality, objectivity, and accuracy.⁷⁸ US plans for media operations in postwar Germany developed out of a number of wartime information operations. A number of different approaches and organizations dominated postwar planning. The first was the civilian Office of War Information (OWI). Founded immediately after the US entry into the war, the OWI sought to wage an information campaign that would not only undermine the Third Reich's war effort but also lay the foundations for a liberal-democratic Germany. Dominated by liberal New Dealers and European émigrés, OWI operatives hoped to establish a US media campaign that was moral, truthful, and distinct from the Nazis. Drawing upon the Atlantic Charter, the OWI promoted the vision of a liberal international system grounded in Wilsonian principles. Its hesitation to use the term "propaganda" and instead use the word "information" to describe the material it broadcast reflects this aim.⁷⁹ Perhaps its most enduring legacy was the Voice of America (VOA), the first official station representing the United States overseas.

Competing with the OWI were the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD). Whereas the OWI opposed the adoption of Nazi-style tactics, the OSS treated information as a means for achieving military goals and believed that the US should use any means at its disposal to defeat Nazi Germany. Unlike the OWI for example, OSS members supported the production and dissemination

⁷⁸ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 50.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 37-38. See as well Clayton D. Laurie, *Propaganda Warriors: America's Crusade Against Nazi Germany* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996).

of false information.⁸⁰ By 1944, with the creation of the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD) within the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force, the military asserted control over anti-Nazi propaganda operations in the field. Although the PWD continued to pursue an OWI style “strategy of truth,” it also believed that war goals and interests needed to be the primary influence on the selection and presentation of information.⁸¹ The PWD pursued what Larry Hartenian has described as an “austere” policy that focused on the allied goal of unconditional surrender and forbade any compromise with Nazism.⁸²

All of these approaches would strongly influence how US occupation authorities treated media and radio operations within its zone of occupation in Germany. No one approach ever came to dominate and supersede the other. Instead, especially at RIAS Berlin, broadcasting would be defined by a mixture and balancing of these different ideas. With the end of the war, the PWD was eventually dissolved and replaced by the Information Control Division (ICD). A department of the US Military Government in Germany (OMGUS), the ICD was responsible for all media operations within the United States Zone of Occupation. This included newspapers, the performing arts, and radio broadcasting. The US hoped to use radio as both a tool for denazification and as the mouthpiece for OMGUS. Stations would affirm the authority of the US military authorities and also stress the need for Germans to take personal responsibility for the crimes of the Nazis. At the same time, ICD stations would promote the creation of a pluralistic democracy by demonstrating objective, impartial reporting that addressed a

⁸⁰ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 37.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸² Hartenian, “The Role of the Media in Democratizing Germany,” 146.

wide array of topics, issues, and political perspectives.⁸³ Various radio stations and newspapers promoted political pluralism by broadcasting divergent opinions and hiring personnel with a variety of political backgrounds, ranging from communists, socialists, and conservatives.⁸⁴

Like the British, the US planned to rebuild German broadcasting through a three-step approach. First, there would be a total blackout of broadcasting followed by a resumption of radio operations under direct US control. Second, the new radio stations would be placed under German control, but with US oversight. Finally, the US would grant full sovereignty to German stations.⁸⁵ US policies differed from the British in that while the latter occupier used the BBC, the US did not utilize any specific model. British officials sought to create one large, centrally coordinated public broadcaster for its Zone. This station, the Northwest German Radio, would eventually become the model and standard for West German broadcasters.⁸⁶ US operations, on the other hand, were much more widespread, with local stations created by Military Government authorities throughout its zone. These included Radio Munich, Radio Stuttgart, and the Radio in the American Sector (RIAS).⁸⁷

As noted in Chapter One, the US created the Radio in the American Sector in response to the Soviet's refusal to share sovereignty over Berliner Rundfunk.⁸⁸ During its early days, RIAS was a relatively small operation with little support. Initially it lacked

⁸³ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 50.

⁸⁴ Hartenian, "The Role of the Media in Democratizing Germany," 158-159.

⁸⁵ Arnulf Kutsch, "Rundfunk unter alliierter Besatzung," 61.

⁸⁶ Manfred Görtemaker, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Von der Gründung bis zur Gegenwart*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1999), 221. See as well, Peter von Rüden and Hans-Ulrich Wagner ed., *Die Geschichte des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks*, (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2005), in particular Hans Ulrich-Wagner, "Das Ringen um einen neuen Rundfunk: Der NWDR unter der Kontrolle der britische Besatzungsmacht," 13-86 and Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 88-112.

⁸⁷ Kutsch, "Rundfunk unter alliierter Besatzung," 63-66.

⁸⁸ For the conflict over interallied control of Berliner Rundfunk, see Kutsch, "Rundfunk unter alliierter Besatzung," 66-70.

a working transmitter, and its lack of resources and equipment meant that it was heard by only a very small number of Berliners. For the first seven months of its existence, it could not even use airwaves to broadcast, having to rely on a “wired broadcast” mechanism (Drahtfunk) that utilized Berlin’s telephone lines to send radio signals.⁸⁹ Only about 5,000 Berliners had access to this type of receiver, and of these only 15% could actually hear the station.⁹⁰ Even after RIAS acquired a long-range transmitter in 1947, the station could only broadcast at less than a quarter the strength of Berliner Rundfunk.⁹¹ Also, whereas Berliner Rundfunk was able to broadcast for most of the day and night, RIAS only had enough personnel and resources to broadcast in the afternoon and evenings.⁹² In the words of US Military Governor Lucius Clay, the RIAS operation at this time was a “rather timid venture.”⁹³

US control officers remained in charge of the operation. Numbering between three and four officials, they held oversight duties over programming and political broadcasts.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the station quickly assembled a number of reporters, many of whom remained with the station for decades. The staff was small, and made up mostly of Germans. These included veteran reporters who were unable to continue working after the Nazi rise to power in 1933 such as Hans Herz as well as new, younger reporters such as Jürgen Graf. Born in 1892, Herz had worked as a foreign correspondent and editor for

⁸⁹ Ibid., 110. William Heimlich, Director of RIAS from 1948-1949 estimated about 1% of Berliners could hear RIAS. William Heimlich, Interview with Brewster Chamberlin, August 4 and 6, 1981, October 26, 1982, Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB), B Rep 37, 3103 no. 88, 67. During this period, the station was known as DIAS, or Drahtfunk in Amerikanischen Sektor.

⁹⁰ Harold Hurwitz, *Demokratie und Kommunismus in Berlin nach 1945 Bd IV: Die Anfänge des Widerstands, Teil 2: Zwischen Selbsttäuschung und Zivilcourage: Der Fusionkampf*, (Bielefeld: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik: 1990), 890.

⁹¹ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 238. Berliner Rundfunk’s transmitter could broadcast at 100 kW in comparison to RIAS’s 20 kW transmitter.

⁹² Ibid., 235.

⁹³ Lucius Clay, *Decision in Germany*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1950), 284.

⁹⁴ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 193.

the Ullstein Verlag before the Nazis dismissed him in 1934 because of his Jewish ancestry. He remained in Germany through the remainder of the war, though he was unable to work. In 1946, he presented and edited RIAS's program *Berliner Pressestimmen* as well as commentaries and reports.⁹⁵ While Herz was an experienced journalist, his colleague Jürgen Graf was a newcomer to journalism. Born in 1927, he was not even twenty when he came to RIAS in 1945 (before it had even begun broadcasting) to work as a reporter. Graf would become one of the most familiar and popular voices at RIAS, working as a reporter until he left the station in 1982.⁹⁶

For the first two years of its existence RIAS attempted to maintain complete neutrality with regards to Berlin and German politics. All political parties were afforded equal airtime to broadcast their positions, (though, critically, only RIAS used the form of a political roundtable. The other US sponsored stations in Germany allowed parties their own individual airtime).⁹⁷ A number of factors led the station's leaders to pursue this policy. First, in accordance with agreements reached at the Potsdam Conference, Allied licensed media organs were banned from openly criticizing any of the occupying powers. The directive declared, "No Occupying Power will permit radio stations within its zone to make broadcasts which constitute malicious material directed against the Occupying Powers with the aim of disrupting the unity among the Allies or evoking the distrust and hostility of the German people against the Occupying Powers."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Ibid., 174.

⁹⁶ Jürgen Graf: RIAS express aktuelle Information, February 25, 1976, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, F604-04-00/0094 and *Der Tagesspiegel*, "Jürgen Graf verläßt den RIAS." April 9, 1982.

⁹⁷ Memorandum, *Air-time allotted to political parties*, August 12, 1947, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), ICD Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 390/42/15-16/2-1, Box 34.

⁹⁸ Memorandum, *Directive for Implementation of Quadripartite Agreement*, September 6, 1946, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), ICD, Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 390/42/15-16/2-1, 1945-1949, Box 34.

Personnel factors also informed this decision. Two of the station's most influential control officers during its first years of broadcasting were German émigrés who had worked for the Office of War Information: Ruth Norden⁹⁹ and Gustav Mathieu. The Chief of Station for RIAS from May 1946 to January 1948, Norden was born in 1906 in London to German parents. Her father was Christian and her mother Jewish. Following the outbreak of the First World War, her family returned to Germany. From 1930 until 1934 she worked as a publisher in Germany before immigrating to the United States in 1934. Between 1935 and 1942 she worked as a journalist, editing and writing for periodicals such as *The Living Age* and *The Nation*. In 1940, she became an American citizen. Following the US entry into World War II, she worked as an editor for the radio section of the OWI until 1945, specializing in broadcasts to Austria and Germany. Following the end of the war, she returned to Germany where she became a civilian official within the ICD's Berlin branch.¹⁰⁰

Gustave Mathieu was another émigré who had worked for the OWI. The son of a German Jewish and a French Catholic, he was born in Mannheim in 1921. In 1934, his family fled to France and in 1937 Mathieu emigrated to the United States. Following the US entry into the war, he worked as an instructor for US soldiers and for US officials planning for the occupation. In 1944, he began working for the OWI, writing and delivering German-language broadcasts. Following the war, he worked for OMGUS, helping to assemble public opinion surveys on the Nuremberg Trials. At the end of 1945,

⁹⁹ No relation to GDR official Albert Norden.

¹⁰⁰ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 199, fn. 668.

he moved to Berlin to help start the RIAS operation. He would remain at RIAS until 1948.¹⁰¹

Petra Galle's describes both Norden and Mathieu as "typical representatives" of the liberal traditions of the OWI.¹⁰² Critically, both were émigrés with a Jewish parent. Both had also participated in the allied war effort. Their approach to US broadcasting in Berlin was firmly grounded in the belief that inter-allied cooperation was essential to the reconstruction of Germany. Furthermore, as former OWI officials with leftwing sympathies, they adhered to the idea that broadcasts should be balanced, politically neutral, and should help promote inter-allied cooperation and perpetuate the wartime anti-Nazi alliance. Their approach (and its consequences) is well illustrated in how the station approached the creation of the Socialist Unity Party. As discussed in Chapter One, Berliner Rundfunk's reports strongly advocated the merger, with some 40 broadcasts declaring that the merger was not just an act of political expediency, but a moral action to insure that the German working class would never again be divide, as they had been in 1933.¹⁰³ However, many social democrats, especially its leader Kurt Schumacher, saw the creation of the SED as an attempt by the communists to capitalize on the SPD's popularity while also neutralizing a potential rival from the political left. Thus, with Berliner Rundfunk broadcasting a barrage of pro-unity commentaries with Soviet backing, members of the Berlin SPD approached RIAS, seeing if it would serve as a counter-balance to Berliner Rundfunk.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, they hoped it could serve the same role as the American licensed newspaper, *Der Tagesspiegel*, which had become the

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 202, fn. 679.

¹⁰² Ibid., 203.

¹⁰³ Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, February 21, 1956, Fred Oelssner, 1946, DRA Potsdam, Historische Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0044 and Sendemanuskript, *Tribüne der Demokratie*, February 10, 1946, DRA Potsdam, Historische Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 203-01-03/0032.

¹⁰⁴ Schivelbush, *Vor dem Vorhang*, 183-196.

major voice in the media against the merger.¹⁰⁵ US officials at both the ICD's Radio Branch and RIAS refused to commit the station to one side or the other. The Radio Branch chief, Charles Lewis, argued in March 1946 that the US goal should be to, "...highlight the Drahtfunk [RIAS] handling of the political issue as an illustration of the American conception of freedom of expression, permitting comparison to be made with the one-sided handling of the campaign by Radio Berlin."¹⁰⁶ Lewis argued that maintaining neutrality in the political debate would demonstrate the benefits and strengths of American traditions of liberal democratic journalism. In comparison to Berliner Rundfunk, which depicted the merger as a choice between right and wrong, moral and immoral, fascist and antifascist, US Radio simply presented a, "discussion of the pros and cons of the proposed KPD-SPD merger."¹⁰⁷

Yet, as the political landscape changed, this policy became increasingly difficult to maintain. Controlling one of the few radio stations in Berlin and monitoring what was broadcast already meant that the United States could not truly claim it was completely objective or neutral. Also, while Charles Lewis spoke of the SED as if it were just another political party, it was in fact openly favored by the Soviet administration. During the unity debate, many social democrats that opposed the merger were imprisoned on Soviet orders. Many who opposed the SED in the SBZ lost their jobs. The Soviets also used their authority to strike non-SED candidates from election lists.¹⁰⁸ With the Soviets openly supporting the SED and using its administrative powers to help influence the

¹⁰⁵ Hurwitz, *Demokratie und Kommunismus in Berlin nach 1945*, Bd. IV, 1062-1071.

¹⁰⁶ Memo from Charles S. Lewis to Robert A. McClure, *Drahtfunk Participation in Berlin Political Situation*, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), ICD, Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 1945-1949, 390/42/15-16/2-1, Box 34.

¹⁰⁷ Weekly Cable to Washington, Office of Director of Information Control, March 29, 1946, NARA, RG 260, (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Information Services Branch (ISB): General Records 1945-1949, 390/48/10/4-7, Box 91.

¹⁰⁸ Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 279 and 328-329.

political landscape of the SBZ in its favor, it was becoming more and more unrealistic for the United States to remain completely detached.

Many of Mathieu and Norden's staff also found themselves in opposition to the decision to remain neutral. Indeed, several German workers at RIAS such as Intendant Franz Wallner-Basté and Chief Editor Hans-Ulrich Kerstens complained to US authorities that RIAS's leadership was decidedly pro-communist and not neutral at all.¹⁰⁹ Wallner-Baste had worked as a journalist and arts critic before the Nazis dismissed him from his post at Southwest German Radio due to his political views. In 1945 he became RIAS's first Intendant. However, his sympathies for the SPD and personal differences with Norden and her Program Director Ruth Gambke, led to his resignation in September of 1947.¹¹⁰ Hans-Ulrich Kerstens had worked as a journalist before serving in the German army from 1943-1945. Like Wallner-Baste, he was a supporter of the SPD. Following his dismissal from RIAS in April 1947 (due to claims that he had covered up his membership in the Nazi party),¹¹¹ Kerstens contended that Mathieu edited stories critical of the Soviets, considered the United States the greatest danger to world security, and gave frequent talks at Berliner Rundfunk.¹¹² The resignations of Wallner-Basté and Kerstens did not bring an end to the criticism of RIAS's leadership. In October 1947 a US Military Inspector found the station mismanaged and unbecoming of a US institution.¹¹³ In November, the SPD leader and West Berlin official Ernst Reuter complained to the US Military that RIAS was using stories from a Soviet news service to

¹⁰⁹ Schivelbush, *Vor dem Vorhang*, 183-196.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 171.

¹¹² *Report from Hans Erich Kerstens*, (sic) June 21, 1948, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector ISB 1945-1949, 390/48/10/4-7, Box 85. A copy of this report also exists in the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv amongst papers contributed to the German Radio Museum by Franz Wallner-Baste. DRA, Schriftgut Bestand des RIAS, Intendanz, F102-00-00/0003.

¹¹³ Memorandum from Roger Smith of the USAF to Mr. Weber, Administrative Chief of RIAS, October 14, 1947, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector ISB 1945-1949, 390/48/10/4-7, Box 85.

criticize his handling of Berlin's electrical problem.¹¹⁴ Commenting on RIAS, Reuter declared that the station was "Berlin's second communist broadcaster."¹¹⁵

Letters from Norden indicate she was critical of the increase in tensions between the Soviets and United States.¹¹⁶ In her letters to the author Hermann Boch, residing in the United States, Norden frequently commented on how the political atmosphere was becoming inhospitable for someone of her political views. In a letter from September 1, 1947, she wrote, "The political trends in the States have a strong reflection here. I don't feel that we are really accomplishing our goal with the occupation much as I would like to say that we do."¹¹⁷ She wrote of the wish for true four-way control of Germany and acknowledged how the Soviets were frequently breaking agreements. However, she wrote, "the solution is not to stoop to the same practices, it would seem to me." The situation in Berlin, Norden complained, lacked men of vision and stature. Her comments on the Greek Civil War also revealed a sympathy for the anti-royalist cause there and a disappointment with what she was being ordered to broadcast at RIAS: "I don't see how one can feel in favor of the Greek Government. Calling all the rebels communists is too much of a simplification."¹¹⁸ Norden claimed the anti-Russian feeling in Berlin was rampant, so much so as, "to make one feel uncomfortable."¹¹⁹ Although she was proud of her work at RIAS, she indicated that she was unsure about asking for a contract

¹¹⁴ Memorandum, *Complaints about RIAS*, November 14, 1947, (NARA), RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector: Records of the Director's Office 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 20.

¹¹⁵ Schivelbusch, *Vor dem Vorhang*, 185.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Ruth Norden to Hermann Broch, September 1, 1947, *Hermann Broch und Ruth Norden: Transatlantische Korrespondenz 1934-1938 und 1945-1948*, ed. Paul Michael Lützer, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005), 242.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

extension.¹²⁰ Whether Norden was feeling pressure to leave the station is uncertain, but it is clear that she was herself unsure about whether or not she wanted to retain her post.

At the same time as these disputes were taking place US media policy in Germany made a turn towards overt anti-communism. In October 1947 US Military Governor Lucius Clay declared that the US media organs would abandon its former policy of neutrality and engage in a “political information campaign” designed to overtly attack the Soviets and German communists.¹²¹ The impartiality that had characterized much of the US media campaign since the end of the war gave way to a much more aggressive and politicized approach that actively criticized the communist system. In January 1948, both Norden and Mathieu were dismissed from RIAS.¹²² Their dismissals were characteristic of many similar personnel changes made throughout the American Zone, as left-leaning officials were replaced throughout the Zone’s media installations. While many scholars of this period have seen this as a surrender of the principles of pluralism and democratization in favor of anti-communism and Cold War,¹²³ the US military government and many German political figures saw the changes as necessary for defending the still fragile democratic order in Germany.¹²⁴ Many within the US Military Government felt that Germany could easily succumb to dictatorship once more and saw the SED and Soviet Communism as the most likely threat to building a democratic order. For RIAS and US information policy as a whole, weakening the influence and

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Hartenian, “The Role of the Media in Democratizing Germany, 170.

¹²² Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 197-203. More specifically, their contracts were not renewed.

¹²³ Schivelbusch, *Vor dem Vorhang* and Hartenian, *Controlling Information*, Mettler, *Demokratisierung und Kalter Krieg*, 98.

¹²⁴ Information Control Division Memo, *A Suggestion for Making the Program of Democratizing Germany more Effective*, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS) ICD Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 390/42/15-16/2-1, Box 11.

attractiveness of communism was the most direct and prominent means for strengthening a democratic order in Germany.

Norden and Mathieu's successor was a military intelligence officer in the Berlin Occupation Government named William Heimlich. Like his predecessors, Heimlich had experience in broadcasting, having managed a small station in the US Midwest.¹²⁵ Heimlich stands as a controversial figure in the history of RIAS Berlin. Born in Ohio in 1911, Heimlich was, by both his own account and those of his subordinates, an aggressive, forceful personality with little time for the nuances and sensitivities of European intellectual and cultural life.¹²⁶ Along with OMGUS Political officer Boris Schub, Heimlich embarked upon a radical reordering of the station's programming and content, firmly establishing it as an anti-communist broadcaster. Heimlich faced three major goals: to remove the "communistic or extreme-left personnel" from RIAS, to change the policy of RIAS from neutrality to anti-communism, and to provide the station with better broadcasting facilities.¹²⁷ Heimlich pushed for the construction of a 100 kW transmitter, increased the hours of daily programming, helped organize new facilities for the station, and hired new reporters and personalities. He also promoted new programming, including the popular cabaret program *Die Insulaner* (*The Islanders*) under the direction of Günter Neumann, which quickly became one of RIAS's most popular and memorable satirical shows.¹²⁸ The political commentators, most notably Victor Klages and Eugen Hartmann, were given relative freedom in choosing and presenting their

¹²⁵ Schivelbusch, *Vor dem Vorhang*, 191.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Memorandum to the Chief of Staff, OMGUS, from Frank Howley, Director OMGBS, April 1, 1949, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector: Records of the Director's Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 13.

¹²⁸ For an excellent overview of Neumann's program, see Sweringen, *Kabarettist an der Front des Kalten Krieges*.

topics. Both were anti-communists and dedicated many of their broadcasts to criticizing both the Soviet system and propaganda.¹²⁹

Victor Klages was 58 years old when he came to RIAS in April, 1947. In 1909 he worked as a freelance journalist, after serving as a volunteer for the *Hamburgischen Neuesten Nachrichten*. During World War I he worked as the press officer for the General Governor of German occupied Belgium. After the war, he worked as a foreign correspondent for the *Berliner Tagesblatt*. During the Third Reich, he worked under a pseudonym, Waldemar Keller, and wrote novels. Since he spoke French, Polish, and Danish, he worked as an interpreter during the early years of World War II.¹³⁰ At the end of the war, he returned to journalism, writing for both the Western and Soviet licensed press. In April, 1947 he was hired to work as a political commentator for RIAS.

Eugen Hartmann was one of several reporters who first began working for Berliner Rundfunk after the war. Born in 1903, he worked as a reporter for various newspapers during the 1920s such as the *Dortmund Generalanzeiger*. He worked throughout the Nazi period as a sports reporter for various newspapers and then as an economics reporter for the Reichsrundfunk before being drafted into military service in 1944. He returned to work for the Reichsrundfunk in 1945, but subsequently fled to the Soviet side with the aid of contacts in the Committee for a Free Germany. He then became a department head for Berliner Rundfunk, but was dismissed from the Soviet backed station under suspicion of “western tendencies” in 1947. He then came to work

¹²⁹ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 203-207.

¹³⁰ Biographical sketch, Victor Klages Nachlass, Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB), E Rep 200-40.

for RIAS. Despite his past ties to the communists and Soviets, he would quickly gain the reputation of being a militant anticommunist through his commentaries.¹³¹

Although the station was firmly opposed to the SED, it did not openly favor either the SPD or the CDU. It nevertheless forged close ties with the West Berlin municipal government. Upon becoming director, William Heimlich established a liason between RIAS and Ernst Reuter, who subsequently presented a Sunday commentary every two weeks on the station.¹³² Reuter worked closely with the station, and although he had been critical of the broadcaster during its early years, he eventually praised the station as a critical part of Berlin's cultural and political landscape.¹³³ While the station worked closely with the local Berlin government, it was not a social democratic institution nor did it ever become one, despite claims made by Heimlich years later.¹³⁴ Indeed, while many of its reporters were either men associated with the political left (such as Eberhard Schütz) or would become prominent social democrats (such as Egon Bahr), others were conservative in their political outlook. However, this did not mean that reporters' politics necessarily dominated their broadcasts. On December 5, 1948, for example, Victor Klages commented on the recent municipal elections and praised individuals for voting.¹³⁵ Yet, in his diary weeks later he admonished the voters as "idiots" and complained that they had "voted for Marxists of another form."¹³⁶ This frustration with the voters did not emerge in his broadcasts.

¹³¹ Ibid., 148.

¹³² Heimlich, Interview, 30. For texts of Reuter's RIAS talks, see Ernst Reuter, *Schriften, Reden*, edited by Hans J. Reichhardt (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1972).

¹³³ Hixon, *Parting the Curtain*, 76-77

¹³⁴ Heimlich Interview, 104.

¹³⁵ Victor Klages, RIAS Kommentar, December 5, 1948, Victor Klages Nachlass, LAB Berlin, E Rep 200-40 no. 18.

¹³⁶ Victor Klages, *Das Dritte Tagebuch des Herrn Keller*, (Klages), LAB, E Rep 200-40 no. 8. December 22, 1948.

RIAS commentaries attacked the Soviet Union's chief claim to legitimacy: that it was the leader of the socialist and progressive world. Instead, RIAS depicted it as another incarnation of totalitarianism, completely uninterested in the true interests of the people of Germany, Eastern Europe, and communist ideology. Its leaders were opportunists and lacked a true concern for the welfare of its people. Soviet claims were contrasted with Soviet actions as a means of undermining Soviet and SED credibility. For commentators such as Victor Klages, the Soviet Union was no different than the National Socialist state. On February 13, 1949 Klages stated this clearly when he asserted that, "Totalitarian states are alike, with the possible exception that one egg is dressed in brown and the other is dressed in red."¹³⁷ Both states secured power through terror, brutally eliminated their enemies, used concentration camps, and had secret police. Both veiled their dictatorial rule in the language of legality. Just as Hitler claimed to "appoint" ministers, so too, did officials in the SBZ.¹³⁸ The Germans living in the SBZ were just as powerless as they were under twelve years of Nazi rule.

A memo from Berlin Information Services chief Charles Lewis dated September 9, 1948, illustrates the dramatic change that RIAS's reporting had undergone in the past year. In it, Lewis recommended to the Chief of the OMGUS Radio Branch, Gordon Textor, that, "Opportunity should be made to repeat in the news events which illustrate SED and SMA responsibility for disruption of functions by the daily elected government for the whole city of Berlin."¹³⁹ It was important for RIAS reporters to stress that Berlin was not a local issue, but one of international importance and that the defense of Berlin

¹³⁷ Victor Klages, RIAS Kommentar February 13, 1949, Victor Klages Nachlass, LAB Berlin, E Rep 200-40 no. 18. "Totalitäre Staatsformen müssen sich ähneln wie ein dem anderen, vielleicht mit dem Unterschied, daß das eine Ei braun, das andere rot gefärbt ist."

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Memorandum from Charles Lewis to Chief Radio Branch, *Instructions on Coverage of Berlin Situation*, September 9, 1948, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), ICD Records of the Radio Branch, 390/42/21/3 Box 303.

was crucial to the survival of freedom in other areas. It was not enough that reports present factual information however. Reporters needed to “give reality to the struggle here,” by presenting on site reports that would better illustrate the events and circumstances in the city.¹⁴⁰ It is interesting to compare this memo to the Berlin Information Service Branch memo from September 1946 (also written by Lewis) instructing RIAS to present a fair and balanced approach to the SPD-KPD merger. RIAS remained dedicated to presenting accurate information. However, the station’s selection of stories, its style of presentation (live, on the scene reporting) and the perspective of its commentaries were all aimed to attack the legitimacy of the Soviet position and undermine the broadcasts of rival stations.

The RIAS broadcast commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Lenin’s death illustrates this point and also shows how closely the station monitored Berliner Rundfunk and based many of its broadcasts on those of its rival. To commemorate the anniversary, Berliner Rundfunk broadcast an excerpt from Beethoven’s *Appassionata* Sonata for Piano, followed by a quote from the Soviet leader: “I know nothing more beautiful than the *Appassionata* and I could listen to it every day. Wonderful, immortal music. I always think, with perhaps a naïve childish pride: How can man create such wonders!”¹⁴¹ Forty-five minutes later, RIAS broadcast an almost identical program, also with an excerpt from the sonata. However, this time RIAS completed the quote, noting that Berliner Rundfunk had edited it:

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ ISB Report, *Lenin Anniversary Features Surprise ‘Cold War’ on Airwaves*, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Information Services Branch, General Records, 390/48/10/4-7, Box 85.

But I can't listen to music too often. It affects my nerves, and makes me want to say sweet nothings and stroke the heads of men who live in a dirty hell and can still create such beauty. But these days you can't go around stroking people's heads lest your hand be bitten off. You have to smash them over the head—smash without mercy, even though in theory we are against every form of oppression of mankind, Hm...Ours is a hellish task.¹⁴²

The RIAS program then went on to note that of Lenin's five pallbearers, four (Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Pjatakov) were shot on orders of the fifth, (Stalin), a man who was, according to Lenin, unsuited for leadership.

In many of his commentaries, Victor Klages depicted the Russian people themselves as victims of the Soviet Union. In an October 18, 1948 report on the United Nations, Klages noted it was not the Russian people who were represented in the General Assembly but their oppressors.¹⁴³ He then touched on Russia's revolutionary past, noting that the Bolsheviks, despite claims to the contrary, could not claim any involvement in the revolution of March 1917. Their seizure of power in November 1917 was not a revolution but a "conspiracy."¹⁴⁴ On the anniversary of the October Revolution in 1948, Klages declared, "November 7 is the most tragic day in Russian history."¹⁴⁵ He continued to criticize the communist claims that the Bolsheviks were responsible for the Russian revolution, pointing out that when the March Revolution of 1917 occurred, Lenin was in Switzerland and Trotsky was in the United States.¹⁴⁶ Rather than come to power by a mass movement, Lenin had seized it, and then dismissed all moderate and socialist

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Victor Klages, RIAS Kommentar, October 18, 1948, Victor Klages Nachlass, LAB Berlin, E Rep 200-40 no. 18.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Victor Klages, RIAS Kommentar, November 7, 1948, Victor Klages Nachlass, LAB Berlin, E Rep 200-40 no. 18.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

ministers, even though far more voters had elected socialists to serve in the constituent assembly.¹⁴⁷

Official US Military Broadcasts also stressed the theme that the Soviets were not true friends of the working class. In June 2, 1949, OMGUS broadcast a commentary on all of its stations in Germany discussing a rail workers strike in East Berlin. The commentary asserted that, despite Soviet claims to be friends of labor, the striking rail workers had been labeled saboteurs and were immediately fired upon by police forces in the SBZ. This act of repression, coupled with the SED's refusal to back the Deutschmark, stemmed from the party's need to insure complete control over the workers of East Berlin. Despite their claims, neither the SED nor the Soviets were concerned about workers' rights.¹⁴⁸

RIAS also responded to the support given to Henry Wallace by Berliner Rundfunk and other SBZ media organs. In May 1948, Klages noted that, "A man like Wallace could simply not exist in the Soviet Union. He would be sitting in a concentration camp in the distant east or, like so many discontented Russians, he would be muzzled and unknown."¹⁴⁹ Thus, Klages argued, despite claims that the big political parties and capitalists were stifling Wallace's voice, he was still permitted to openly criticize the Truman administration. In 1948, with a policy of renewed repression being implemented by the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union, critics like Wallace could not exist. Again, Klages aimed to stress the discrepancy between Soviet claims and rhetoric with their actual actions.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ American Military Government Talk, "The Rail Strike and the Foreign Ministers Conference," June 2, 1949, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the ICD, Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 1945-1949, 390/42/15-16/2-1, Box 23.

¹⁴⁹ Victor Klages, RIAS Kommentar, May 23, 1948, Victor Klages Nachlass, LAB Berlin, E Rep 200-40 no. 18.

For many of its listeners, RIAS's focus on the discrepancies in the Soviet Union's policy towards German soldiers captured during World War II must have had particular resonance. On December 20 1948, January 4, 1949 and January 11, 1949, Eugen Hartmann broadcast commentaries reminding listeners that despite Soviet promises to release prisoners by the end of 1948, there was no sign that they would be returning home. He touched on listener's sympathies, stressing they were incarcerated contrary to international agreements and noted that they were in, "forced labor camps," rather than Prisoner of War camps.¹⁵⁰ On January 4, Hartmann told listeners that evidence indicated some 2 million soldiers remained in camps in the Soviet Union. On January 3, 1949, Klages broadcast a commentary on the topic of Soviet dictatorship. During the course of the broadcast, speaking about political prisoners in the Soviet Union, Klages noted that there were nine million Russians, two million Czechs and Poles, "and also two million Germans in Soviet Concentration camps."¹⁵¹ Although Klages does not refer to those incarcerated as prisoners of war, the figure of two million, used earlier that week by Hartmann, indicates that Klages was most likely referring to POWs. Thus, former soldiers were given the same status as prisoners from those states invaded and occupied by the German army: Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Russia. All were equal victims of Soviet Communism.

As historians such as Robert Moeller have demonstrated, the fate of German soldiers captured on the Eastern Front was of paramount concern for Germans after the war.¹⁵² In an indication of the importance radio stations held for Berliners during this

¹⁵⁰ ISB Policy Report no. 76, December 23, 1948 78, December 30, 1948, and 79, January 13, 1949, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Information Services Branch, General Records 1945-1949, 390/48/10/4-7, Box 96.

¹⁵¹ Victor Klages, RIAS Kommentar, January 3, 1949, Victor Klages Nachlass, Laarch Berlin, E Rep 200-40 no. 18.

¹⁵² Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories*.

period, many wrote to Berliner Rundfunk for answers. In May 1947 alone, more letters sent to the station concerned prisoners of war than actual programming. Of the 4,994 letters received, station officials reviewed 1,273. The most pressing concern of most of them was food and housing, with 232 and 223 of the letters concerning nutrition and provisions respectively. The third most popular topic was prisoners of war, addressed in 141 of the letters. 134 concerned employment, and 109 concerned “returning home” and “refugees.” More letters concerned nutrition, housing, and the prisoner of war issue than what was actually being broadcast on station programs (135 letters).¹⁵³ One letter writer asked the station why all of the POWs held in the United States had been allowed to return, but not those in the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁴ Another writer asked simply for a list of those still alive in camps.¹⁵⁵ Another listener asked why, if Berliner Rundfunk was so interested in promoting the livelihood and education of German youths, they showed so little concern for German youths still in prisoner of war camps.¹⁵⁶ Another simply asked for some kind of mail, having received no word from her loved one since the summer of 1946.¹⁵⁷

The POW issue was a difficult one for the German communists in the SBZ. The Soviet leadership was slow to reveal information about soldiers still in camps, and although it was clearly a concern of the German populace, the SED was unable and unwilling to confront the Soviets about the issue. Hence, RIAS saw a weakness in the SED’s inability to assert its authority. In a March 1949 broadcast, Klages noted that

¹⁵³ Bericht, June 4, 1947, Büro des Intendanten, Hörerabteilung, DRA Potsdam, Bestand Hörfunk, H 201-00-04/0001.

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Lilli S., July 21, 1947, Büro des Intendanten, Hörerabteilung, DRA Potsdam, Bestand Hörfunk, H 201-00-04/0001.

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Ursel B., July 15, 1947, Büro des Intendanten, Hörerabteilung, DRA Potsdam, Bestand Hörfunk, H 201-00-04/0001.

¹⁵⁶ Letter from Max W., July 8, 1947, Büro des Intendanten, Hörerabteilung, DRA Potsdam, Bestand Hörfunk, H 201-00-04/0001.

¹⁵⁷ Bericht, June 4, 1947, Büro des Intendanten, Hörerabteilung.

only, “dependable anti-fascists” were permitted to return because the SED knew that the return of all German prisoners of war from the Soviet Union would unleash a wave of anti-communist propaganda from the soldiers.¹⁵⁸ By broadcasting commentaries on the lack of information about POWs and also noting that the Soviets were constantly reneging on their promises to release the soldiers, the station was clearly exploiting discrepancies in both Berliner Rundfunk’s broadcasts and public statements made by the SED and the Soviet leadership in Germany.

Like Berliner Rundfunk, RIAS could often be too optimistic and try and depict an obvious setback as a victory. It was an approach criticized by listeners. An example was a commentary by Victor Klages discussing the communist coup in Czechoslovakia. On February 25, 1948, communists under the leadership of Klement Gottwald seized control of the Czechoslovak Government. Shortly after, Czech foreign minister Jan Masaryk was found dead under mysterious circumstances. The event increased the divide between the United States and Soviets and convinced many socialists and liberals that communist claims to want to share leadership in Eastern Europe were false. It was also perceived by many as a blow to constitutional and democratic government in Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁹ However, Klages interpreted it as a sign of weakness on the part of the communists, arguing that the Czechoslovak communists were aware of their weaknesses and concluded that the violent seizure of power was the recourse of a desperate movement.¹⁶⁰ The Czechoslovaks would not be so easily beaten according to Klages (this was broadcast before Masaryk died on March 10). The communists lived in fear that the full

¹⁵⁸ Victor Klages, RIAS Kommentar, March 13, 1949, Victor Klages, Victor Klages Nachlass, LAB Berlin, E Rep 200-40 no. 18.

¹⁵⁹ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 32-33.

¹⁶⁰ Victor Klages, RIAS Kommentar, February 22, 1948, Victor Klages Nachlass, LAB, E Rep 200-40 no. 18.

truth of their actions and goals would be discovered, and that people of Czechoslovakia would demand their democratic rights. The same situation, Klages contended, was happening in the SBZ.¹⁶¹ It was a highly optimistic appraisal of what was in reality a catastrophe for democracy in Czechoslovakia.

In many ways, however, listeners preferred an honest appraisal of the situation rather than overly optimistic reports that proved false. In a listeners meeting held by the US Military Government in December 1948 to discuss RIAS reports on the final division of the Berlin government into western and eastern halves, listeners complained about overly optimistic broadcasts.¹⁶² In particular, they noted that depicting Soviet victories as communist setbacks reminded them too much of Goebbel's propaganda. The tone of both letters to the station and listener meetings reveal a population fearful of the Soviets and concerned about allied resolve to maintain their position in Berlin, not one confident in Soviet and communist defeat.¹⁶³ As an OMGUS survey of public opinion between July 1948 and January 1949 indicated, many Berliners felt that the Americans needed to do more to relieve the city, with about 30 percent feeling not enough was being done in contrast to under 10 percent in the rest of the American occupation zone.¹⁶⁴ Consequently, honesty was better appreciated in a period of high tension. Thus, for example, broadcasts were often skeptical, such as when talk abounded that the Berlin blockade would be lifted. During the first two weeks of May, RIAS broadcast several

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Radio Diskussion, *Communist retreat in Berlin*, December 2, 1948, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the ICD, Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 390/42/15-16/2-1, Box 35.

¹⁶³ Letters to RIAS, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director's Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 20.

¹⁶⁴ OMGUS Occupation Opinion Survey, "2: In Your Opinion are the Western powers doing all they possibly can to relieve the needs of Germany, or could they do more?" NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director's Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 4. See as well Anna J. Merritt and Richard L. Merritt eds. *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany: The OMGUS Surveys, 1945-1949*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

commentaries cautioning listeners not to get the hopes up about a lifting of the blockade, noting previous moments when the Soviets had backtracked.¹⁶⁵

RIAS's staff often faced the challenge of how critical to be of allied policy and the United States. The station and US Military Government was not entirely uncritical, such as in a US Military Broadcast sent on March 3, 1949 in which it was acknowledged that US attempts to purchase and redistribute large estates to small farmers throughout its occupation zone had, up to that point, been largely unsuccessful.¹⁶⁶ However, a debate between US Information officers in December of 1948 revealed the limits to which the US would present self-criticism. In December 1948 a memo was sent to the Information Control Division suggesting US stations broadcast stories about a US government report concerning US education policies that also contained admissions of low enrollment, low graduation rates, and overcrowding. In a memorandum from December 9, 1948 on the report, Heimlich wrote to the US Berlin Commander, Frank Howley, "Granted that these figures may be correct, their use in Europe would immediately be distorted to the advantage of Soviet propaganda instruments."¹⁶⁷ Howley concurred, and a memo sent to Gordon Textor, commander of information policy through the US Occupation Zone, noted that, "The purpose of our support of RIAS is not to discuss American weaknesses but to put emphasis upon our strong points."¹⁶⁸ Textor concurred, but then pointed out that, "We are grinding out anti-Soviet material in all forms and to the extent that recently

¹⁶⁵ ISB Policy Reports no. 94, May 5, 1949 and no. 95, May 13, 1949, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the ISB, General Records 1945-1949, 390/48/10/4-7, Box 96.

¹⁶⁶ American Military Government Talk, "Die Bodenreform in der Amerikanischen Besatzungszone," March 3, 1949, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the ICD, Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 1945-1949, 390/42/15-16/2-1, Box 23.

¹⁶⁷ OMGUS Memorandum, *Educational Broadcasting Material*, December 9, 1948, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector: Records of the Director's Office, General Records 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 13.

¹⁶⁸ Memorandum from Colonel Frank L. Howley to Colonel G.E. Textor, Information Services Division, Undated, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector: Records of the Director's Office, General Records 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 13.

we have been criticized all over the Zone for overdoing it, to the exclusion of other types of information in which perhaps the Germans in the Zone are more interested.”¹⁶⁹ Textor expressed frustration with both Howley and Heimlich, as well as weariness with the overwhelming volume of anti-communist press and broadcasts.

As can be seen from an overview of RIAS’s broadcasts, the anti-communist tone must have been overwhelming. The vast majority of news commentaries broadcast during 1948-1949 were focused on discrediting Soviet claims and the Soviet system, to the exclusion of other stories. Thus, while RIAS’s staff made a concerted effort to provide accurate reports, its selection of stories was designed to undermine the Soviet Union.

Listeners were appreciative, however, as indicated in numerous letters sent to the station throughout the blockade. Whereas before 1947 Berliner Rundfunk effectively held a monopoly on broadcasting, by 1949 some 90% of Berliners were claiming RIAS as their favorite station.¹⁷⁰ The correspondence with RIAS is a fascinating means of examining how RIAS went from being just a purveyor of news and information into a quasi-US embassy, a representative of the United States in East Germany. Many of the letters do not address programming, but were used by their writers as means of expressing their frustration with the SED and the lack of resources. A woman from Saxony asked her sister in a letter from August 28, 1948 to visit RIAS and tell them “how we are clinging in our desperate situation to the news broadcast by them. They know of our situation which is unworthy of human beings, and they alone can inform the world of

¹⁶⁹ Memorandum from Colonel G.E. Textor to Colonel Frank Howley, December 16, 1948, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector: Records of the Director’s Office, General Records 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 13.

¹⁷⁰ RIAS Opinion Survey, May 1949. NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director’s Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 4. In the same survey, just 10% of Berliners selected Berliner Rundfunk as their favorite station.

our sufferings. How long will it last yet?”¹⁷¹ On July 19, a woman from Magdeburg complained about malnutrition and commented on how she looked at the Western Zones with envy.¹⁷² Letter writers often used the opportunity to correspond with RIAS as a means to condemn the Soviets. In these cases, old Nazi attitudes often came to forefront. In a letter dated July 15, 1948, one writer declared, “We Germans are indignant at the mean actions of the hodgepodge of Asiatic peoples such as Tatars, Mongols, ect. without our being able to offer resistance. And with shame we see that the three ‘Great Powers’ fear the Russian dictator and don’t check him.”¹⁷³ The writer went on to state that the three Western Allies should expel the “Bolshevist power” from Germany, and that if Germans were given the necessary weapons, “...no Russian would be in Germany or would disturb the world.”¹⁷⁴ Another writer, who declared that it was better to die by “atomic bombs” rather than Russian oppression, echoed this same hatred of the Soviets. “Piek, Grotewohl, and followers have to be exterminated for they are the worst enemies of the people.”¹⁷⁵ The writer went on to declare that, “If the Russians were human they could have proved it in East Prussia...They are as lions and tigers delighted with the blood of mankind.”¹⁷⁶

Such attitudes, stemming from years of National Socialist anti-Bolshevist propaganda, coupled with the memory of the brutal Soviet occupation during the months

¹⁷¹ Letter to RIAS forwarded by Hilde A, August 28, 1948, Letters to RIAS, Letters to RIAS, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director’s Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 25.

¹⁷² Letter to RIAS from a Woman from the Rural District of Magdeburg, Letters to RIAS, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director’s Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 25.

¹⁷³ Letter to RIAS from Gerhard H, July 15, 1948, Letters to RIAS, NARA RG 260, OMGUS, Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director’s Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 25.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Letter to RIAS from Anonymous, July 24, 1948, Letters to RIAS, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director’s Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 25.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

immediately after the war, were not uncommon.¹⁷⁷ Other writers also offered their services to help Berlin, though certainly not in such a belligerent manner or tone. On August 30, 1948 a writer noted her sadness at the state of the Reichstag building. She summarily sent RIAS a letter offering the services of both herself and her 13-year old son to help rebuild the structure.¹⁷⁸ On July 26, 1948 a listener wrote asking if he could volunteer to help the airlift efforts. Describing himself as a “seventy-five percent disabled former police-officer,” he nevertheless promised to do the best he could to help.¹⁷⁹ In other cases, writers sent letters expressing their thanks for the airlift. When the station announced the death of pilots in accidents related to the airlift, writers sent letters expressing their thanks and condolences and asked RIAS to forward their letters to the appropriate authorities. On July 25, 1948 a mother wrote, “Just now I heard that another American airplane has crashed. Deeply moved I think of the victims and ask you to deliver the condolence of millions of Berliners to the American authorities. When my 15-year old son heard the terrible news the tears rushed to his eyes—and he is no weakling indeed.”¹⁸⁰ RIAS was neither in charge of the airlift or responsible for reconstruction efforts in Berlin. Yet, the fact that letter writers treated RIAS as a conduit to the authorities responsible for these efforts reveals that many saw RIAS as more than a radio station. It was a two-way channel from which individuals could hear the voice of the United States and through which listeners could direct their concerns directly to American officials.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Christina Morina notes that these sentiments were not unusual, but in fact stemmed from years of being bombarded by National Socialist propaganda. See Morina, *Legacies of Stalingrad*.

¹⁷⁸ Letter to RIAS from Elfriede S, August 30, 1948, Letters to RIAS, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director’s Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 25.

¹⁷⁹ Letter to RIAS from Josef K, July 26, 1948, Letters to RIAS, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director’s Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 25.

¹⁸⁰ Letter to RIAS from Agnes Fila, July 25, 1948, Letters to RIAS, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector, Records of the Director’s Office, General Records, 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 25.

As the blockade was lifted in May 1949¹⁸¹, and the situation in Berlin stabilized, RIAS underwent a number of personnel changes as the US government transferred control of the station from the military to the High Commission for Germany under John McCloy. The change led to the dismissal of most of the more ardent anti-communist broadcasting officials: Heimlich, Eugen Hartmann, and the satirist S.S. Varady. A memo, presumably by Heimlich, criticized the action by arguing that, “This action can only indicate to the Berlin population that RIAS is to turn back to the innocuous non-fighting station which it was prior to February 1948 when Heimlich took it over upon the direction of General Clay and General Howley.”¹⁸² The official reports at the time attributed the need for change to mismanagement and the simple fact that Heimlich was spending money he had not been sanctioned to spend.¹⁸³ The RIAS staff had also been granted programming freedom, “to such a degree that political and other programming decisions were made almost entirely by the German staff.” The RIAS staff was not receiving political guidelines from US Military Government officials. Berlin Radio Chief Charles Lewis concluded that the staff was not working efficiently, programs were uncoordinated, and a more efficient operation needed to be implemented.¹⁸⁴ Thus, just a month before Heinz Schmidt at Berliner Rundfunk was dismissed, his counterpart at RIAS was replaced, though for very different reasons.

¹⁸¹ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 34.

¹⁸² RIAS Memorandum, October 1, 1949, NARA, RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the Berlin Sector: Records of the Director’s Office, General Records 1945-1949, 390/48/8-9/7-4, Box 13.

¹⁸³ Memorandum, *Supplemental Report on Regularization of RIAS*, October 5, 1949, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the ICD, Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 1945-1949, 390/42/15-16/2-1, Box 37. For example, it was found that Heimlich had circumvented orders to reduce the salary of broadcaster S.S. Varady, and had maintained an exorbitant pay scale. His “very close friend” (and future wife) the radio play actress Christina Olsen was also paid an exorbitant salary for doing relatively little work.

¹⁸⁴ Memorandum for Deputy Director of RIAS, *Report on Regularization of RIAS*, September 15, 1949, NARA RG 260 (OMGUS), Records of the ICD, Records of the Director and Deputy Director, 1945-1949, 390/42/15-16/2-1, Box 37.

Conclusion

The political circumstances of the emerging Cold War forced both Berliner Rundfunk and RIAS to make compromises with basic founding principles. For Berliner Rundfunk, it meant turning from the broad goal of forging an antifascist coalition and focusing much more of its airtime on engaging and criticizing the media of the Western Allies. The failure of the blockade and the increasing popularity of RIAS led the SED leadership to replace the station's leadership. Coming the same month as the creation of the German Democratic Republic, the dismissals began a process of ideological centralization at the station. Over the course of the next two years, most of the leading officials who had helped found Berliner Rundfunk were removed from their positions as the SED placed control over radio in the GDR under the State Committee for Radio. The loss of most of the professional broadcast journalists to emigration and denunciations required the creation of specialized Radio Schools in 1950 to train reporters in Marxist-Leninist theory and further strengthen the ideological character of radio in the GDR.¹⁸⁵ Thus, the events of the Berlin blockade sped up the process of centralization under SED administrative and ideological control.

Neither Berliner Rundfunk nor RIAS presented a completely balanced view of the causes of Germany's division and the blockade. RIAS downplayed the US's own decision to break with the Soviets over governing Germany as a unified unit. The station's reporters' also underestimated how much Marxist-Leninist ideology influenced the worldview of the Soviet leaders. Thus, they failed to acknowledge the impact that measures such as the Marshall Plan and Deutschmark would have on Soviet perceptions.

¹⁸⁵ Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 203-219.

Its reporters' tendency to interpret events such as the 1948 Prague Coup and division of Berlin as evidence of Soviet weakness also rang false with many listeners. Yet, RIAS was accurate in its reports about the blockade and airlift. Stalin's decision to blockade Berlin was certainly an act of aggression. The blockade also threatened the stability of the Berlin economy. RIAS was also correct when it reported that the suppression of democracy and establishment of communist satellites in Eastern Europe contradicted the Soviet's claims that it represented democracy and justice. Likewise, the Soviet promise to release German POWs, frequently made and broken, was evidence that Soviet words and claims could not be trusted.

While it simplified and misrepresented American policies as a wish to create an imperialist-capitalist dominion over Western Europe, Berliner Rundfunk was not incorrect when it argued that the Marshall Plan and introduction of the Deutschmark were neither benign nor altruistic. Both policies were based primarily on preserving the fundamental foreign political and economic interests of the United States. The Marshall Plan, while it helped rebuild the European economy, was also deployed to undermine communism's attractiveness. Thus, the Marshall Plan was as much an anti-communist measure as it was an economic one. Yet, Berliner Rundfunk failed to acknowledge the fact that Europe's democratically elected leaders accepted the Marshall Plan aid and joined the NATO alliance out of fear of Soviet encroachments. Furthermore, while Western Europe quickly coalesced into an alliance led by the United States, it was not transformed into an American dominion, but remained a constellation of independent, economically viable states.

For RIAS, the blockade saw the station abandon its goal of neutrality in favor of overt anti-communism. Both German and American officials saw it as a means of defending the fragile political order in West Berlin. By the summer of 1949 however, it was clear that the immediate threat to liberal democracy in West Berlin had subsided. Heimlich's dismissal in 1949 must be seen in this context. With the emergency over, Heimlich's lack of oversight over programming and weak management skills were seen as a liability. Despite his dismissal, RIAS remained an active critic of the SED, Soviets, and German Democratic Republic. The far more conciliatory Fred Taylor and Gordon Ewing replaced the combative and confrontational Heimlich. At the same time, with West Berlin's status as a free enclave of West Germany secure, the station shifted its programming to undermining the political order in East Germany.

The Berlin blockade and airlift was a watershed moment. The blockade strengthened RIAS's position as the principle source for news and information for East Germans. Its reporting of the Berlin airlift not only served to bolster the morale of West Berliners, but also solidified the station's reputation for providing accurate news broadcasts. This had as much to do with Berliner Rundfunk's own reports as it did with RIAS's. With each day that West Berlin remained under blockade, Berliner Rundfunk's prognosis for Western survival rang more and more false. Despite Berliner Rundfunk's June 1948 prophecies of failure and war, the Allies successfully provisioned the city without starting World War III. The planes did not carry bombs but flour and coal. At the same time, RIAS made sure to exploit the Soviets' unkept promises, such as when it focused a number of broadcasts on the failure of the USSR to release German POWs in late 1948. By predicting that the Soviets would renege on their promise to allow German

POWs to return and also by predicting that the airlift would succeed and West Berlin remain free, RIAS considerably strengthened its credibility. It was not just that RIAS promoted and reinforced listeners' worldviews and political attitudes. As noted, the airlift *had* worked. The Allies had *not* started a Third World War. The Western half of the city remained free of Soviet control. These facts could not be disputed. Thus, RIAS was able to strengthen its position as a reliable source for information due to its approach to reporting as well as to the deficiencies and failures of its rival broadcasters.

The events of the blockade were also critical to defining the political programming of both RIAS and Berliner Rundfunk. The major themes, assertions, and motifs deployed by both stations during the conflict over the blockade would recur throughout the 1950s. The events of the blockade also established the basic principles guiding both broadcasters. Berliner Rundfunk's primary focus would be to present news stories in such a way that they would support the arguments of the SED and help build socialism in East Germany. RIAS's new goal was to serve the East German populace as a rival station to the GDR's broadcasters. Although the station styled itself as an objective, factual alternative to the GDR's radio stations, it nevertheless devoted itself to achieving political goals and to driving a wedge between the SED and the East German populace.

Chapter Three: Means of Engagement and Models of Journalism: RIAS, SFB, and Berliner Rundfunk

The early 1950s were a period of considerable institutional transition for Berlin's radio stations. The end of the Berlin blockade and founding of two German states sparked a period of consolidation and transformation with regards to broadcasting. At the same time, important continuities remained between broadcasting during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s. In West Berlin, RIAS continued to style itself as a broadcaster serving the interests of both the people of Berlin and the German Democratic Republic. The combative style of Heimlich's RIAS management was replaced by a more moderate style of leadership that continued to encourage American-German cooperation but also aimed to undermine the GDR. In East Germany itself, the SED embarked upon a process by which it centralized all broadcasting operations under a State Radio Committee. At the same time, Marxist-Leninist ideology became the primary guiding principle behind both news reporting and the training of journalists. A further important change for Berlin radio was the founding of Sender Freies Berlin in 1954 as the first independent, West Berlin based public broadcaster in the city.

All of these changes affected broadcast journalism in the city. This chapter explores the development of different models of journalism and means engagement at Berlin's radio stations during the 1950s. It also considers the major institutional developments that influenced both how each station operated and informed its approach to the major events of the early Cold War. These models of journalism, many of which

stemmed from guiding principles laid down during the occupation period, dominated broadcast reporting throughout the 1950s, until the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. The chapter will explore three major subjects. First, I will examine how RIAS, journalists and commentators developed a systematic approach to news broadcasting that stressed the need to balance objective reporting with the need to actively use broadcasts to disrupt and undermine the German Democratic Republic and drive a wedge between the ruling SED and East German people. As I will show, for RIAS's staff "objective" did not only mean accurate, but also connoted a style of presentation. Through its reports, RIAS hoped to transform itself into a rival fourth estate for the East German people that would attack the hegemony of the GDR's information organs. Second, I will examine the development and creation of Sender Freies Berlin. By examining the debates surrounding the station's creation, I will not only examine how SFB tried to establish itself as a voice for the people of West Berlin Third, but I will also compare its position in West Berlin to that of RIAS. Finally, I will consider how reporters in the GDR became ideological fighters dedicated to promoting and defending the major tenets of Marxist-Leninist ideology. The SED and StRK encouraged active engagement and openly subjective, pro-communist reporting that would agitate the masses and undermine RIAS's credibility. In the course of this chapter I will consider both the institutional transformation of the GDR's broadcasters as well as consider how the SED trained and prepared reporters capable of presenting a Marxist-Leninist worldview to its listeners.

Building a Rival Fourth Estate: RIAS Reporting between Objectivity and Engagement

RIAS's goals remained consistent throughout the 1950s. According to a United States Information Agency report from 1958, its purpose was to transmit the policy of the United States to the inhabitants of East Germany, to maintain the morale of the East German population, and to remind East Germans that they have not been forgotten by the west. It was to, "maintain in the East Germans a critical judgment and questioning attitude which will assist them in giving proper balance to and making proper comparisons between, the ideologies of the East and the policies, aims and aspirations of the West."¹ RIAS's goal was not just to present American viewpoints and information to East German listeners, but to actively encourage critical thinking and a critical attitude within the populace of the GDR. These goals determined the nature of character of RIAS political broadcasts.

In 1973, a member of the station's political department, Frederick Noppert, wrote in a history of the station: "From the very first day, news broadcasts were the most important information transmitted by RIAS. It still remains so today."² A RIAS organization plan from 1950 helps us understand this importance. Four American officials appointed by the US government supervised all RIAS operations: a Director, a Director of Programming and Production, a Deputy Director, and a Comptroller. Like other German radio stations, there were three central departments: technical, programming, and administration. However, importantly, *political* programming at RIAS was under the authority of the Deputy Director and Political Director and *not* the programming director. Thus, while the program director (who was German) had

¹ *Evaluation of RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) Berlin*, April-May 1958, NARA, RG 306 United States Information Agency (USIA), Office of Research Special Reports 1953-1963, Entry 1009A, 250/67/07/04-07, Box 15.

² Friedrich Noppert, "Das Politische Programm und sein Schema," in *Die Geschichte des RIAS*, August 1973. Unpublished manuscript, Gordon Atkinson Ewing Papers (Ewing Papers) Box 3, George C. Marshall Library, Lexington Virginia. (Marshall Library), 62. "Die Nachrichtensendungen waren vom ersten Tag an und sind noch heute die wichtigsten vom RAIS [sic] übermittelten Informationen."

authority over cultural broadcasts, music, and entertainment programming, he or she did not have authority over political broadcasting. The political programming department was divided into five sections: a current affairs, domestic politics and economic issues, news a department for freelance commentators, and a department responsible for the western broadcasting (“Sendestelle West”).³ While news and commentary were the responsibility of a diverse number of individuals, both American and German, RIAS directors considered it necessary to draw a clear distinction between political programming and the rest of RIAS’s programs.

Between 1949 and 1961, five individuals served as RIAS Directors: Frederick G. Taylor (1949-1953), Gordon A. Ewing (1953-1957), Laurence P. Dalcher (1957-1959), Alexander Klieforth (1959-1961), and Robert Lochner (1961-1968). The most influential of these during the 1950s was Gordon Ewing. Ewing had been RIAS’s political director and deputy director since 1949. Finding the work interesting, he retained his duties in the political department even after becoming Director of the station in 1953.⁴ As Political Director from 1949-1957, he was responsible for guiding the station’s political programming during an eight year period that saw Stalin’s death in 1953, the East German Uprising of June 17, 1953, Khrushchev’s Secret Speech and Destalinization, the Suez Canal Crisis, and the Hungarian Uprising. Like his two predecessors, William Heimlich and Fred Taylor, Ewing had been a student in Germany during the 1930s, attending the University of Kiel in 1931. During the occupation of Germany, he worked with the Cultural Administration in Wiesbaden and then as an editor for the American

³ RIAS-Organisationsplan vom Januar 1950 (ohne Redaktionen und Referate), in Petra Galle/Axel Schuster, *Archiv und Sammlungsgut des RIAS Berlin: Ein Findbuch zum Bestand im Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv*.

⁴ RIAS Interview with Gordon Ewing, May 19, 1981, Ewing Papers, box 1, Marshall Library, 11.

sponsored newspaper, *Neue Zeitung*.⁵ In May of 1949, just as the Berlin blockade was lifted, the ICD assigned him to work as political director for RIAS. Ewing enjoyed great popularity as RIAS director. RIAS Journalist Peter Schultz recalled that he was, “the very model of the American gentlemen, tall, slender, musical and literary, always well dressed, amiable, and confident on the social and diplomatic dance floor.”⁶ His management style was cautionary and moderate. Throughout the numerous crises of the 1950s, Ewing demonstrated a good understanding of the tensions and anxieties that affected German politics in Berlin during the early Cold War. Furthermore, he was keenly aware of how East German and Soviet officials perceived RIAS’s broadcasts.

The working atmosphere at RIAS during these years was extremely harmonious, and many reporters have reflected on how collegial German-American cooperation was years after the fact.⁷ Both reporters Jürgen Graf and Peter Schultze recalled this collegiality years later, with Peter Schultze noting that the America-German relationship created a distinct spirit of experimentation and freedom in terms of broadcasting and reporting. Reporters, Schultze declared, were treated as journalists and not as civil servants.⁸ Egon Bahr, RIAS’s Bonn Bureau Chief, also remembered the good working environment at the station, and noted that many of his colleagues at other German broadcasters envied the interpretive freedom RIAS afforded him and his fellow reporters.⁹

RIAS’s German reporters included both journalists who had joined the station at the very beginning in 1945-46, such as Jürgen Graf, Gerhard Löwenthal, Victor Klages,

⁵ Hebert Kundler, Gordon Ewing Nachruf des RIAS, August 21, 1990, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut Bestand des RIAS, Biographies, F604-04-00/0094.

⁶ Rexin, *Radio-Reminiszenzen*, 57.

⁷ Schanett Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, 103-104. See also the personal memoirs in Rexin, *Radio-Reminiszenzen*.

⁸ Rexin, *Radio-Reminiszenzen*, 53-61.

⁹ Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 64

Hans Herz, and Peter Schultze, and several reporters who entered the station's service during the latter months of the Berlin blockade. Notable amongst these was Eberhard Schütz, RIAS's Program Director during the early 1950s. Unlike many of his coworkers, Schütz had extensive experience in international broadcasting and also had a history of committed involvement in politics. Born in 1911, he became affiliated with the German Communist Party during the Nazi Period, working as head of the Party's Propaganda section for Frankfurt. He was a committed anti-Nazi, and it was this factor more than anything else that motivated his decision to join the Communists. After Hitler's seizure of power, Schütz fled to Paris and eventually went to the Soviet Union where he taught German. However, Schütz became disillusioned with the Soviets as a result of the Great Purges and was arrested by the NKVD. After staging a hunger strike, the Soviets deported him to Germany. He immediately fled to Paris and then to London in 1938. Schütz experience made him a valuable resource for the British Broadcasting Corporation, and he worked as a radio commentator for the BBC's German Service during the Second World War. He returned to Germany with the British Occupation Authorities, where he worked for both the British sponsored Northwest German Radio (NWDR) and the American sponsored radio station in Stuttgart.¹⁰ In November 1949 he became a commentator and editor for RIAS Berlin.¹¹

Schütz's background stands out amongst RIAS reporters. Not only did he have experience in political broadcasting, but had also been an active participant in anti-Nazi and anti-communist political movements. His was an outlook and political worldview shaped from experiences living in Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and wartime Britain.

¹⁰ Ansgar Diller and Wolfgang Mühl-Benninghaus, ed. *Berichterstattung über den Nürnberger Prozeß gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher 1945/46*, (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1998).

¹¹ Herbert Kundler, *RIAS Berlin*, 388-389.

Most of his colleagues, in contrast, were either young and inexperienced upon entering work at the station, (Jürgen Graf, Peter Schultz, Egon Bahr, Hans-Peter Herz, Mathias Walden) or older, more experienced journalists who had no open political affiliation (Victor Klages) or were forced out of their positions due to the Nazi's racial laws (such as Hans Herz). Many had served as soldiers in the German military and many were simply seeking work following the end of the war in a Germany afflicted by economic deprivation and uncertainty. Many of RIAS's first reporters came to the broadcaster with little professional experience. Three of these were Egon Bahr, Heinz Frentzel, and Mathias Walden. All had served in the German military during World War II and all three were under thirty when they began work for the station: Bahr was 27, Frentzel was 28, and Walden was 23.

Egon Bahr was born in 1922 and served in the Wehrmacht from 1942 until 1944. Although trained in industry before being called to service, he embarked upon a career in journalism upon the end of the war, reporting for both Soviet and US licensed newspapers in Berlin, most notably *Der Tagesspiegel*. In 1950, he left *Der Tagesspiegel* and began working for RIAS, becoming head of the station's Bonn Bureau, where he reported on the parliamentary proceedings of the West German Bundestag. During his time at RIAS, Bahr also became involved in the politics of West Berlin's Social Democratic Party, and subsequently joined the party in 1956. In 1960 he left RIAS to become press secretary for Willy Brandt, where he continued to maintain connections with both RIAS and SFB and even continued to present commentaries at both stations. He eventually became one of Willy Brandt's most influential foreign policy advisers,

played an important role in shaping Ostpolitik and the foreign policy of the SPD throughout the 1970s and 1980s.¹²

Heinz Frentzel's experiences before joining RIAS were similar to Bahr's. Born in 1921, Frentzel had worked in publishing before serving in the Wehrmacht from 1941 until 1945. At the end of World War II, he moved to Thuringia where he found work in the Education Ministry. While there he also worked as an editor for the *Thüringer Landvolk* and for Thuringia's radio station. Disillusion with the increased controls over journalism in the Soviet Zone led Frentzel and his family to move to the American Zone, despite an offer of 50,000 Marks from the Thuringian government to stay. Upon moving to the American Zone he worked for Sueddeutsch Rundfunk and then, in 1949, was hired by RIAS. He worked a RIAS for the next thirty years, providing foreign affairs commentary on all of the major events of the next three decades for RIAS listeners.¹³

Mathias Walden, whose real name was Otto Baron von Sass, was born in 1927. During World War II he served in the Luftwaffe. Upon the end of the war he began to work as an editor for *Der Union*, the official newspaper of the Christian Democratic Party in the Soviet Zone. In 1950 he left the SBZ to work for RIAS, where he served as a commentator until 1956, when he moved to the newly created Berlin broadcaster Sender Freies Berlin. He worked at SFB until 1964.¹⁴ Walden was a prominent member of West Germany's community of journalists until his death in 1984 and was also a close friend and associate of publisher Axel Springer. Throughout his career, he worked for *Der Monat*, *Die Welt*, and *Die Welt am Sonntag*. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, describing his

¹² Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*.

¹³ *Der Sozialdemokrat*, October 4, 1949 and Kersten Decker, "Eine freie Stimme der freien Welt: Des Feindes Lieblingsfeind," *Der Tagesspiegel*, April 13, 2007.

¹⁴ "Mathias Walden," *Wer ist Wer?* Bd. 1, 1969/1970, 1388-1389. Information available at DRA Potsdam, Personal Dossier: Mathias Walden. See as well "Mathias Walden Gestorben," *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 18, 1984.

political outlook, wrote, “The profile of Walden’s opinions was clear and distinctive: a liberal conservative, who with his pen lobbied for the unity of the nation, for the freedom of Berlin, for reconciliation with the Jews, for the social market and with it won admiration and honors from admirers and detractors alike.”¹⁵

Bahr, Frentzel, and Walden were all born in territory that either comprised part of East Germany (Thuringia, Saxony) or was partly occupied by the GDR (Berlin). Thus, for all three, the territory and people that comprised East Germany was not another, foreign state or even another “Germany,” but was an integral part of *their* Germany and *their* homeland. Evidence of this conviction can be seen in a US State Department memo in which one official noted that RIAS’s staff opposed placing the station under the direction of Radio Free Europe (RFE), the US broadcaster designed specifically for Eastern Europe. Doing so, RIAS’s staff contended, would imply that the Eastern Zone was a Soviet satellite and not German territory under Soviet occupation.¹⁶ Reporters Jürgen Graf, Peter Schultze, Hans Peter-Herz, Roland Müllerburg, Gerhard Löwenthal, Erich Nieswandt, as well as Cultural Program Editor Friedrich Luft and *Die Insulaner* director Günter Neumann were all born in Berlin. They all opposed the SED regime and the division of Germany. They supported the alliance with the United States, and for the most part opposed those neutralist elements within Germany’s emerging postwar political culture that aimed to detach Germany from the western alliance and embrace a distinctive path that would be more amenable to reunification. More than anything, for these men

¹⁵ “Mathias Walden Gestorben,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 19, 1984. “Im Profil seiner Meinungen war Walden allemal klar und unverkennbar: ein liberaler Konservativer, der für die Einheit der Nation, für die Freiheit Berlins, für die Aussöhnung mit den Juden und für die sozial Marktwirtschaft seine Feder einsetzte und damit Bewunderung und Auszeichnungen gewann und auch sich Gegner schuf.”

¹⁶ Memorandum by W. Bradley Connors of the Office of Policy and Plans International Information Agency, to the Under Secretary of State, May 28, 1953, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), 1952-1954: *Germany and Austria Volume VII Part 2*, No. 708.

(and they were predominantly men) the division of Germany was the critical problem of the day. Thus, many RIAS reporters had a personnel interest in both opposing the German Democratic Republic and providing news to those Germans living behind the Iron Curtain. For RIAS's reporters, journalism was a task imbued with deep political and moral obligations that went beyond simply reporting events. This personnel investment played a critical role in creating an atmosphere of cooperation between Germans and Americans.

The US department responsible for overseeing RIAS's operations changed numerous times. From 1946-1949, it had been an institution of the OMGUS ICD. RIAS was the only ICD station not to be placed under German control in 1949. Instead, it became the official broadcaster of the United States High Commission for Germany (HICOG).¹⁷ In 1953, the Eisenhower administration created the United States Information Agency (USIA) to organize and coordinate the various US information campaigns directed against the Eastern Bloc.¹⁸ The USIA was responsible for coordinating US information efforts throughout the world. Its creation represented a distinct shift in US psychological warfare, as the Eisenhower administration shifted from the containment of the Truman presidency to the more aggressive and confrontational policy of "roll back" that sought to actively encourage open opposition throughout the Eastern bloc.¹⁹

¹⁷ Galle, *RIAS Berlin und Berliner Rundfunk*, 1945-1949, 39.

¹⁸ The USIA was known as the United States Information Service when it operated overseas. I use USIA to denote both domestic and overseas operations. Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 89.

¹⁹ Christian F. Ostermann, "Die Beste Chance für ein Rollback? Amerikanische Politik und der 17. Juni 1953," in *1953-Krisenjahr des Kalten Krieges in Europa*, ed. by Christoph Kleßmann and Bernd Stöver (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), 115-139. See as well Osgood, *Total Cold War* and Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg*, in particular chapter seven, and Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*.

As will be seen, RIAS had been pursuing a policy of openly engaging and undermining the GDR years before the USIA was even created. RIAS's relationship with the USIA was a complex one that showed no clear lines of direction or implementation of policies. RIAS had established its programming and reporting profiles years earlier during the Berlin Crisis of 1948-49. The station's success as well as logistical factors meant that its reporters and editors enjoyed considerable freedom from authorities based in the United States with regards to reporting and programming. Many RIAS reporters have frequently commented on this independence.²⁰ Ewing also noted that, while USIA input was welcomed, it was often kindly accepted but not implemented.²¹ As a news broadcaster, RIAS required the freedom to report news stories as they occurred without waiting for oversight approval from the USIS offices in Europe or the USIA in Washington. Consequently, during events such as the June 17, 1953 uprising in the GDR, RIAS reporters were often forced to make on the spot reporting decisions.²² Yet, as Schanett Riller has shown, there was considerable synergy between what policies the USIA wished to pursue and how RIAS carried those policies out. In nearly five hundred broadcasts sent during the 1950s, Riller notes, there was not a single example of USIA goals not being satisfied.²³ In spite of the often spontaneous and on-the-spot decision making on the part of US directors and the freedom afforded to the station's German staff, RIAS programs often demonstrated a remarkable adherence to overall US policy goals. Much of this was certainly due to the USIA's broadly defined goals of disseminating a favorable and positive image of the United States. As long as RIAS

²⁰ Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 47, Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 64, Rexin, *Radio-Reminiszenzen*, 57

²¹ Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 22.

²² Ibid., 47.

²³ Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, 261.

remained popular in East Germany and its reporters were committed to criticizing the SED regime, the USIA had little reason to interfere or micromanage the RIAS operation.

RIAS styled itself as an objective radio station that was nevertheless not neutral. In an official report on the station written by HICOG in the early 1950s to provide a general overview and background of the station to interested parties, the author declared, “For [Germans in the Soviet Zone] RIAS constitutes the only major source which provides them with straight, unbiased and clean cut news.”²⁴ In their recollections, reporters and officials frequently remarked upon the stress on accuracy advocated by the station leaders. In 1981, Gordon Ewing remarked that, “we prided ourselves and we were justified in doing so, on straight news broadcasts.”²⁵ The station’s Bonn Bureau Chief, Egon Bahr, also touched on this issue, noting, “Nothing that we sent could have a second, concealed meaning.”²⁶ RIAS reporters understood that any sign that news had been fabricated would be detrimental to the station’s overall goals of winning the favor of German listeners. As Ewing recalled, “Our whole existence was based upon our credibility with that big Soviet Zone audience.”²⁷ Credibility was linked with accuracy. News stories could not be broadcast unless they appeared on at least two wire services or some other source.²⁸ These included the Deutsche Nachrichtenagentur (DENA), Associated Press (AP), Deutscher Pressedienst (DPD), and Reuters. The station also relied on other radio station reports and considered the BBC German language service

²⁴ US High Commissioner for Germany, *RIAS: Radio in the American Sector*, (Undated [1953]), 3.

²⁵ Ewing Interview, 22.

²⁶ Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 76. “Die Hörer sollten vertrauen können; nichts, was wir sendeten, sollte eine zweite verborgene Bedeutung haben.”

²⁷ Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

and VOA to be trustworthy sources of information.²⁹ By the mid 1950s, the station had earned a reputation as an efficient, professional news organization. A USIA official once commented, upon visiting the station, “ ‘Good heavens, that’s like sitting in on the *New York Times* editorial staff.’ ”³⁰

News editors conferred daily with the American control officers and political officers. Nearly all news was political in nature, “designed to inform and supplement the knowledge of the listener in the Soviet Zone.”³¹ News selection was based on the assumption that East Germans wanted to be primarily informed about world events. The focus on international events showed a clear understanding of GDR listener concerns. Opinion surveys made by the GDR’s State Radio Committee (StRK) throughout the 1950s demonstrated a clear belief amongst listeners that not enough airtime was being spent addressing international affairs and news outside of the GDR.³² Not only did accurate reporting set RIAS apart from East German stations, but it was also the station’s best defense against the attacks from those same stations. Since the East German media could attack RIAS’s legitimacy if it broadcast inaccurate information, truthful reporting was not just a journalistic principle, but also a potent broadcasting technique that could be deployed to undermine the East German media and government.

RIAS’s conception of political broadcasting is well synthesized in a USIA report drawn up in 1953. Written by Ralph White of the agency’s research office, the USIA intended the memo for all USIA operations. RIAS’s broadcasts nevertheless closely

²⁹ Herbert Kundler, *RIAS Berlin: Eine Radio Station in einer geteilten Stadt*, (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1994), 80.

³⁰ Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 16.

³¹ *Evaluation of RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) Berlin*, April-May 1958, NARA RG 306 United States Information Agency, Office of Research Special Reports 1953-1963, Entry 1009A, 250/67/07/04-07 Box 15.

³² See, for example, *Analyse einer Hörerbefragung*, April 4, 1957, BAB, DR 6/246, *Berliner Rundfunk Hörerverbindung*, October 13, 1958, BAB, DR 6/559, and *Analyse über die Massenverbindungen des Rundfunks* October 19, 1953, BAB, DR 6/231.

followed its recommendations. In his report, White declared that, “A sharp distinction should be made between objectivity, which we seek, and neutrality, which we do not seek—between distorting bias, which we try to avoid, and strength of conviction, which we take for granted in ourselves and frankly try to create in our listeners.”³³ Here, as with RIAS’s broadcasts, objectivity does not mean impartiality and detachment, but accuracy and a wish to avoid actively distorting facts for political ends. White’s recommended approach entailed two distinct techniques: scrupulous accuracy on the one hand and a commitment to a particular political viewpoint on the other.³⁴ It required, in White’s words, the creation of a, “necessary but difficult combination of forcefulness and objectivity...”³⁵ It was necessary for reports to be scrupulous and accurate.³⁶ Important documents should not be ignored, even if they were problematic, for Soviet and Communist media most likely had access to a similar document. Stations needed to avoid sweeping statements. As White noted, “People often like the feeling that they are drawing conclusions directly from the facts, without having these conclusions pushed in their faces.”³⁷

However, this style of journalism went beyond simply reporting accurate facts. Another important element was a sincere commitment on the part of reporters to their material. “No speaker or writer should be asked to say or write anything that he believes to be even an exaggeration of the truth.”³⁸ White considered silence on a particular issue preferable to insincerity. Genuine interest in the audience’s viewpoints, culture, and

³³ Memorandum from Ralph White to Plans Board through Leo Lowenthal, *Proposed Suggestions to All Media on How the label of ‘Propaganda’ Can be Avoided Without Sacrificing Effectiveness*, May 23, 1953, NARA Record Group 306 (RG 306), Records of the United States Information Agency (USIA), Office of Research, Special Reports 1953-1963, Entry 1009A, 250/67/07/04-07, Box 2.

³⁴ Ibid, ii.

³⁵ Ibid..

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, 3

³⁸ Ibid. Underlining in original document.

traditions on the part of reporters was also a critical element. As White warned, “A listeners’ feeling that he is being merely manipulated—that he is looked upon merely as a means to the propagandist’s ends, and not also as an end in himself—is an important element in his readiness to apply the label “propaganda;” and if the feeling of respect is to be conveyed it must be real.”³⁹ Style of presentation was as critical as content.

Reporters also needed to present their stories with frankness and honesty. In comparison to Soviet propaganda, White contended, American broadcasts needed to avoid a black-and-white picture of the world. Nuance and candor, he argued, were more effective means for winning the loyalty of listeners. White argued that this needed to be expressed in a very selective use of concessions that refuted or qualified the arguments being made by American media outlets. While the primary US goal of fostering support for collective security against the Soviets could not be conceded, minor points and arguments could be acknowledged as long as they did not harm this primary goal.⁴⁰ Overall, White proposed that an “atmosphere of objectivity” needed to be created through US broadcasts. As he concluded, “The crucial factors in creating an atmosphere of objectivity are intangibles which cannot be confined in any formula: the ring of sincerity, genuine respect for and psychological contact with the audience....and the kind of empirical attitude which shows itself in cautious, balanced statements of fact.”⁴¹

White’s report was drawn up to address perceived deficiencies in a number of USIA operations, mostly those directed at western, non-communist states. Yet, the model of journalism White proposed in 1953 had been developed and institutionalized by RIAS by 1948. It had been pursuing this mix of objectivity and accuracy coupled with

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 8.

sincerity and engagement through both its news and commentaries since the Berlin blockade. A letter sent from RIAS News director Hanns Schwartz to Program Director Eberhard Schütz in 1953 provides a good illustration of some of the concerns and challenges facing RIAS's news staff and the need to balance accuracy with engagement. Throughout, Schwarz presented a number of guidelines intended to improve RIAS's news programming and insure that news reports were accurate.⁴² Critically, Schwarz was concerned that reports not only be accurate, but *sound* accurate and objective. Schwarz wrote, "I undertook my task half a year ago of improving our news by cleaning its language and formulate radio news along objective lines."⁴³ Among Schwarz's recommendation was that direct citations should only be used in exceptional cases, such as when someone used words that were, "especially meaningful or especially grotesque."⁴⁴ Whenever a reporter directly quoted a statement, it was critical that he precede it with phrases that indicated the words were not those of the reporter. Here, Schwarz touched on the critical difference between radio news and printed news: one could not *see* quotation marks in a radio broadcast. Failing to elaborate on who said what threatened to cloud the distinction between speaker and source and imply that RIAS itself was making the declaration.

Throughout, Schwarz also cautioned news broadcasters about the dangers of indirect citation and excessive description. Schwarz wrote, "For the purposes of objectivity, description and quotations using indirect language should not be

⁴² Letter from Hanns Schwarz to Eberhard Schütz, June 11, 1954, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, F 404-00-00/0009.

⁴³ Ibid., "Ich übernahm meine Aufgabe vor ein einhalb Jahren mit dem Ziel unsere Nachrichten zu verbessern und sie zu den sprachlich saubersten und am objektivistischen formulierten Funknachrichten zu machen."

⁴⁴ Ibid. "Wir wollen Zitate in direkter Rede nur in Ausnahmefällen verwenden. Und zwar nur dann, wenn jemand einige besonders bedeutungsvolle oder besonders groteske Worte sagt, bzw. Dann, wenn aus einer Erklärung, einem Komminuque oder Programme bestimmte Teile unverändert und ungekürzt wiedergegeben werden sollen."

intermingled.”⁴⁵ Indirect citations needed to make sure they used the subjunctive I form of conjugation. Unlike English, German uses a verb conjugation known as Subjunctive I (Der Konjunktiv) to indicate when someone other than the speaker or writer has said something. Thus, Schwarz cautioned speakers to use the word “sei” instead of “ist.” Both mean “is.” Thus, even though in English there is no other way to conjugate the word “to be” in the sentence, “Adenauer said, he will work until the EVG *is* created,” (italics mine), in German, a distinction can be made. As Schwarz wrote:

...also nicht: Adenauer sagte, er werde solange arbeiten bis
die EVG geschaffen ist,
sondern bis die EVG geschaffen sei.⁴⁶

Consequently, speakers needed to draw clear distinctions between their words and the words and declarations of their subjects.

To illustrate the problems with excessive description, Schwarz presented the following sentence:

Based on communications of the Chancellor, based on the words of the Chancellor, based on the intention of the Chancellor, Germany will be reunited tomorrow. The Chancellor turned towards the question of German unity and disclosed that, based on his information tomorrow, it will be reunited...he named the coming Friday as the day for the reunification.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., “Schilderung und Zitat in indirekter Rede bitte um der Objektivität willen nicht miteinander vermengen.”

⁴⁶ Ibid. Underlining is from original text.

⁴⁷ Ibid. “Nach Mitteilung des Kanzlers, nach den Worten des Kanzlers, nach Ansicht des Kanzlers wird Deutschland morgen wiedervereinigt. Der Kanzler wandte sich dann der Frage der Einheit Deutschlands zu und teilte mit, dass es nach seinen Informationen morgen, wiedervereinigt wird...nannte als geplanten Termin für die Wiedervereinigung den kommenden Freitag.”

The previous sentence, due to its excessive use of description, clouded the meaning of the sentence, and implied that the Chancellor had set a specific date for Germany's reunification. To further illustrate the problem, Schwarz presented a series of weaker sentences:

Ollenhauer demands the renunciation of the EVG.

This phrasing, Schwarz contended, failed to provide adequate distinction between commentary and news. So did the second possibility:

Ollenhauer demands a renunciation of the obsolete EVG.

This sentence implied that it was common, accepted knowledge that the European Defense Community was "obsolete." Instead, Schwarz recommended the sentence:

Ollenhauer demands a renunciation of the EVG, which he described as obsolete.⁴⁸

The preferred sentence distinguished RIAS's report from Ollenhauer's opinion.

⁴⁸ Ibid. "Ollenhauer forderte den Verzicht auf die EVG.", "Ollenhauer forderte Verzicht auf die überholte EVG.", "Ollenhauer forderte einen Verzicht auf die EVG, die er als überholt bezeichnete."

Interestingly, Schwarz made a special note on “quotations from Eastern Men” (“Eastern” referring to leaders in both East Germany and the Communist Bloc). “When I directly or indirectly quote people from the East, I cannot expect my listeners to believe that these “Ostmenschen” utilize our terminology for their area and public facilities.”⁴⁹ In this regard, Schwarz was referring to RIAS’s refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the GDR. The station always used terms such as “Soviet Zone” or “Pankow Authorities” or “Pankow Regime.”⁵⁰ Likewise, Schwarz continued, it was unlikely that Zhou en Lai described his country as “Red China.” Implying that East German and Chinese leaders called their governments “the Pankow authorities” and “Red China” would ring false to RIAS listeners, thus threatening credibility. To solve this problem, Schwarz recommended, “In the cases of Grotewohl and Zhou Enlai one can respectively say:declared, *their governments* would.”⁵¹ Another alternative was: “Based on Grotewohl’s message, the Pankower authorities want to implement action.”⁵² As with Schwarz’s other recommendations, this sentence demonstrates a clear distinction between Grotewohl’s declaration and the language deployed by RIAS news editors and speakers to describe Communist Bloc regimes.

Schwarz letter reveals an important characteristic of RIAS’s news broadcasts. It was not enough that broadcasts were accurate. They needed to sound accurate and objective and present a sense of personal detachment. News language needed to be clear and straightforward, drawing understandable boundaries between reporters’ own

⁴⁹ Ibid., “Wenn ich Leute aus dem Osten direkt oder indirekt zitiere, kann ich unseren Hörern nicht zumuten, zu glauben, dass diese Ostmenschen unsere Begriffe für ihre Gebiete und Einrichtungen verwenden.”

⁵⁰ Pankow was the district of Berlin where the majority of the SED leadership (and hence the East German government) lived.

⁵¹ Ibid. “Im Falle des Herrn Grotewohl und des Herrn Tschu en Lai kann man jeweils sagen:....erklärte, *seine Regierung* werde.” Italics mine.

⁵² Ibid., “Nach Mitteilung Grotewohls wollen die Pankower Behörden neue Massnahmen treffen....”

declarations (and hence, RIAS's declarations) and quotations of subjects (the topics of RIAS's reports). The selection of specific words, terms, and phrases was a painstaking process, with great political implications attached to each decision. Critically, Schwarz stressed the need to treat radio as an oral medium that was heard and not read. The RIAS news director argued that it was imperative for RIAS reporters to speak in a clear, succinct, understandable language that left no doubt in the listeners' minds who said what and when.

One can see these rules displayed (and the accompanying balance between accuracy and partisanship) in most RIAS news broadcasts, especially those concerning the German Democratic Republic. For example, when the North Korean army invaded South Korea in June of 1950, RIAS's initial report on the attack presenting a basic overview of the events, and made sure to explicitly note the source for the story:

This morning, the Communist Government of North Korea has officially declared war against the South Korean Republic. Communist troops, supported by tanks and artillery, have penetrated several points in South Korea. According to a dispatch from the Associated Press, the Deputy Prime Minister of South Korea has requested military support from the United States. At the request of the United States, the United Nations Security Council will convene at 7:00pm to discuss the situation in Korea.⁵³

⁵³ RIAS News Broadcast, June 25, 1950, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, Nachrichten, B 203-00-02/0001, "Die kommunistische Regierung von Nordkorea hat der südkoreanischen Republik heute morgen offiziell den Krieg erklärt. Kommunistische Truppen sind mit Panzer—und Artillerie-Unterstützung an mehreren Punkten in Südkorea eingedrungen. Einer AP-Meldung zufolge hat der stellvertretende südkoreanische Ministerpräsident die USA um militärische Unterstützung gebeten. Der Sicherheitsrat der UNO wird heute abend um 19 Uhr auf Antrag der Vereinigten Staaten zusammentreten, um über die Lage in Korea zu beraten."

When, in March 1952, Stalin delivered his note proposing German reunification to the Western Allies, RIAS reported the factual details about the proposition. When it broadcast doubts about the note, it made sure to attribute the criticism to a particular source. Thus, while it was likely that RIAS's staff found Stalin's proposal dubious, it nevertheless made sure to back up their doubts with other sources. Thus, in a news broadcast from March 11, 1952, the RIAS reporter noted: "According to a commentary from the *Basler Nationalzeitung*, the appearances of a generous offer falls into the background, if one is aware of the Soviet Union's foreign policy in the last seven years."⁵⁴ Thus, while RIAS freely broadcast the criticisms of individuals like Ernst Reuter and the French Foreign Ministry, it made sure to attribute the quotations and observations and not make it seem as if RIAS endorsed these beliefs.

However, even in its official news reports RIAS made sure to undermine the legitimacy of the GDR and its political culture. For example, in an October 15, 1950 broadcast on elections in East Germany, RIAS reported:

In the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, so-called (sogenannten) peoples' elections organized by the peoples' democracy for the National Front began early today around 8:00. The Soviet licensed newspapers described this day as a 'National Holiday of the Nation' and a 'Festival for the People.'⁵⁵

⁵⁴ RIAS News Broadcast, March 11, 1952, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositium, Nachrichten, B 203-00-02/0001. "In einem Kommentar der Basler Nationalzeitung heisst es, der Anschein eines grosszügigen Angebotes trete sofort in den Hintergrund, wenn man die Aussenpolitik, der Sowjet-Union in den letzten sieben Jahren als Ganzes betrachte."

⁵⁵ RIAS News Broadcast, October 15, 1950, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositium, Nachrichten, B 203-00-02/0001. "In der sowjetische besetzten Zone Deutschlands begannen heute fruh um acht Uhr die nach den Regeln der kommunistischen Volksdemokratie organisierten sogenannten Volkswahlen für die kommunistische nationale Front. Die sowjetische lizenzierten Zeitungen bezeichnen den heutigen Tag unter anderem als einen 'Feiertag der Nation' und ein 'Fest des Volkes.'"

In this brief passage, the RIAS broadcast took every opportunity to undermine the East German state. It was “the Soviet occupation zone in Germany.” The report described the elections as “so-called peoples’ elections.” And even though RIAS made sure to note its source, it used the phrase “Soviet licensed newspapers” to describe the GDR’s press. At the same time, however, the report also went into specific detail about the election procedure, noting that:

According to previous reports from the Eastern Zone, voters receive a ballot with a list of candidates, stamped with the words “For Peace and the Five Year Plan.” It has been reported that in different locations, neither ballots nor pencils are available. The ballots are handed over to officials, who place them in the ballot boxes themselves. The Soviet Zone news service ADN reports that whole houses, streets.⁵⁶

The report, most likely based on anonymous East German sources providing RIAS with information (“it has been reported”), demonstrated a clear wish to provide listeners with specific detail and information. It also acknowledged that its sources were limited due to the fact that no outside observers were permitted in the GDR to monitor the votes. At the same time, RIAS did not ignore the East German press, and repeated the GDR news service ADN’s claim that individuals were marching lock step to the polls in a festive mood. While it did not lend credence to these reports, it nevertheless stressed that it was listening to and monitoring the East German press.

⁵⁶ Ibid., “Nach den bisher vorliegenden Berichten aus der Ostzone erhalten die Wähler einen Zettel mit dem Verzeichnis der Kandidaten und mit einer Handstempel-Aufschrift ‘Für Frieden und Fünfjahresplan.’ Es wird gemeldet, dass in verschiedenen Wahllokalen weder Wahlzellen noch Bleistifte vorhanden sind. Die Wahlzettel werden dem Wahlleiter übergeben, der sie selbst in die Urne steckt.”

The goal of producing accurate broadcasts, while grounded in the principle that journalism should be objective, reflected a stance that eschewed neutrality in favor of open confrontation with East Germany's media organs and the SED. RIAS aimed to insinuate itself as a political actor in East German political culture and create a rival fourth estate for the German Democratic Republic. As Alexis de Tocqueville and Jürgen Habermas have both argued, a free and independent press is a critical means for establishing an open public sphere.⁵⁷ In large democratic states, the press stands as a mediator and purveyor of information. However, both Habermas and Tocqueville were speaking of the role of a free press in a "democratic" public sphere. In contrast, RIAS hoped to create a rival public sphere within a dictatorship. By connecting East Germans to one another through its broadcasts, RIAS hoped to do exactly what the SED wanted its radio stations to do: organize the citizens of East Germany and promote a particular political worldview.

The most notable means of doing this were programs designed specifically for GDR audiences, such as *Werktag der Zone*, (Workday in the Zone), *Berlin spricht zur Zone*, (Berlin speaks to the Zone) *Aus der Zone, für die Zone* (From the Zone, to the Zone), and *Sendung für die Landbevölkerung*, (Broadcasts for the Rural Population). One of the most popular of these, *Werktag der Zone*, began broadcasting in 1951 and was aimed specifically at the working classes of East Germany. Broadcasting just after 5 in the morning, the show gave workers a chance to hear news about working conditions in East Germany as they prepared for a day's work. The program broadcast information on social laws and benefits, problems with wages and wage levels, statistics related to the

⁵⁷ For a brief overview of Habermas and Tocqueville's theories of the press and democracy, see Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4-6.

labor market, and social justice. The programs included news broadcasts, commentaries, and live interviews.⁵⁸ Other programs operated on a similar principle: to provide an alternative viewpoint from the broadcasts of the East German media on conditions in the GDR.⁵⁹

The goal behind *Werktag der Zone*, and similar programming reveals a critical component of RIAS's programming. The station criticized the SED by advocating workers' rights. The purpose was to attack the SED's chief claim to legitimacy: that it was the only German political movement that could claim the right to interpret and understand the principles of Marxism and workers' rights. RIAS thus continued to utilize an argumentation that it had developed during the Berlin blockade: East Germany was a totalitarian state whose supposed Marxism was merely a veil masking its true purpose: to increase the power of its leaders and, subsequently serve as a puppet of the Soviet Union.

RIAS's 1951 campaign against Collective Contracts in East Germany illustrates many of the elements of RIAS's East German political broadcasting. The Collective Contracts were one of several means deployed by the SED to centralize its authority. Throughout 1951, RIAS waged a campaign focused on disrupting the implementation of the contracts and subsequently gain a foothold amongst East German listeners. In a report on the campaign, RIAS Political Director Gordon Ewing acknowledged that RIAS was aware from the start that it could not prevent the implementation of the contracts. However, he noted, RIAS could aid the people of East Germany to, "win a new sense of solidarity against the rule of the Socialist Unity Party (SED)..."⁶⁰ Assessing the

⁵⁸ Noppert, "Das Politische Programm und sein Schema," 68.

⁵⁹ Markus Wackett, " 'Wir sprechen zur Zone,' Die politischen Sendungen des RIAS in der Vorgeschichte der Juni-Erhebung 1953," *Deutschlandarchiv*, 9 (1993), 1035-1048.

⁶⁰ *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, February 18, 1953, Ewing Papers, Box 1, Folder 5: RIAS Official Reports, Marshall Library.

campaign's success, Ewing concluded that, "a radio station made, perhaps for the first time in the cold war—a systematic, calculated, prolonged effort to give practical aid to a large group of oppressed people battling only with their wits on an issue sharply defined in time and content."⁶¹ Facing an isolated population unable to organize or assert itself against the SED regime and its media monopoly, RIAS's goal was to act as a guiding voice. As Ewing commented, the campaign could disrupt the GDR in a number of ways:

But the people of the Zone, aided by RIAS, nevertheless had much to gain: they might greatly delay the deterioration of their working and living standards; they could win a new sense of solidarity against the rule of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), as the Communist party is called in the Soviet Zone; they might cause the SED difficulties with the Soviets, and the Soviets a renunciation of some sort of the hoped-for increase in reparations from current production.⁶²

Thus, RIAS was not just interested in providing East Germans with information on wage and working conditions in East Germany. It sought to provoke political change. The hoped for change was modest and there is no indication that RIAS aimed to provoke a revolt or somehow topple the East German government. Yet, there was a firm conviction that radio broadcasting could both affect life in East Germany and harm relations between the SED and Soviet Union. This last point was important, for RIAS was not only interested in driving a wedge between the SED and East Germans, but also in isolating the SED from Soviet Union.

⁶¹ Ibid, 1.

⁶² Ibid, 3. Section is underlined in the original document.

The campaign against the contracts focused on three goals: informing listeners about when the contracts would be implemented, provide analysis that would reveal those provisions in the contracts that would be disadvantageous, and finally “expose the regime’s real purpose in introducing the contracts and the consequences for the workers.”⁶³ Broadcasts focused on the true aim of the SED contracts: to isolate and control the workers in the GDR as part of the general goal of centralization and Stalinization. As Ewing reported, “We had to supplant the lack of a local free press. That is, we had to gather and disseminate as much news as possible about the nature of the contracts in various works in order to break down the isolation of the many worker groups.”⁶⁴ If an employee achieved a victory against the GDR at one plant, Ewing noted that it was RIAS’s responsibility to insure that “all other plants in the Zone were informed.”⁶⁵ Combating the isolation inherent to totalitarian societies, RIAS aimed to construct an “imagined community” of East Germans, a community that could challenge the national and socialist consensus that the SED hoped to create.⁶⁶

At the same time, these broadcasts attempted to resurrect the German traditions of democratic, trade union politics that had been destroyed by the Nazis and suppressed by the SED. Rather than deploy the language of right-wing anticommunism, with its roots in Nazi era anti-Bolshevism, RIAS embraced the ideas of workers’ rights, solidarity, and unionism. For example, the station granted West German union leaders such as Gerard Haas of the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) airtime on *Berlin spricht zur Zone*, so that he could describe working conditions and the nature of workers’ rights in the Federal

⁶³ Ibid, 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁵ *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 7.

⁶⁶ For the original use of this term to describe national identity, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 1983).

Republic. In his report, Ewing noted, perhaps ironically, “The dangers of workers solidarity were well known to the Communists, of course.”⁶⁷ As Ewing reminded his readers, “We believed that it was important to show (a) that we had no intention of siding with former Nazis just because they opposed the Communists, and (b) that the West was not deceived by the Communists’ play on undesirable social elements.”⁶⁸ The station presented the argument that the SED were not true Marxists, that it deliberately distorted Marxist ideology for its own ends, and that it was a puppet of the Soviet Union. An example of this was heard on a broadcast of *Berlin spricht zur Zone*, sent in September 1951 in response to a speech made by Deputy Free German Union Alliance (FDGB) Chairman Kirchner. In the course of the broadcast, the speaker declared: “The fight over the collective contracts really is a class struggle...Let us ask ourselves what the classes are today. They are the exploited and the exploiters.”⁶⁹ Thus, RIAS attempted to turn the SED’s interpretation of Marxism on its head by transforming the SED into the exploiter class. The broadcast then closed by stating:

‘The proletarians’ labor, through the use of machinery and the division of labor, has lost all independent character and therefore all interest for the worker. He has become a mere attachment to the machine. The costs created by the worker are limited almost entirely to the cost of nourishment necessary to maintain him and procreate his kind. To the same degree that the repulsiveness of work increases the pay decreases. Moreover, to the same degree in which the use of machinery and the division of labor increase, the amount of work increases, whether through extension of the hours of work, the amount of output

⁶⁷ *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 29.

⁶⁸ *Berlin spricht zur zone* (Hereafter BsZ), September 1951, (Specific Broadcast Date not given), quoted in *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 37.

⁶⁹ *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 37.

demanded within a given time, speed-up of the machines,
or whatever.⁷⁰

If these words sound familiar, it is because they were not written by any of RIAS's reporters. As the program speaker noted in closing, "Well, Herr Kirchner, these last four sentences were not written by us. Their author was Karl Marx...Herr Kirchner, while he was in the Soviet Union, forgot how to read the Communist Manifesto correctly and apply it to present conditions..."⁷¹ RIAS utilized a line of argumentation it had been using since 1948: namely attacking the SED's claim that it was the sole interpreter of Marxist Ideology.

This approach belonged to a distinctive form of anti-communism that had been developed by SPD leaders such as Ernst Reuter, Kurt Schumacher, and Willy Brandt. Both Reuter and Brandt in particular had stressed that the SED did not have the monopoly on Marxist interpretation, and that the SPD was both a democratic and a Marxist political party.⁷² It was an anti-communism that was distinct both from the Nazi's anti-bolshevism as well as the anti-communist rhetoric of Christian Democratic Leader and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Thus, one can see that RIAS in many ways belonged within the West Berlin political milieu of anti-communist social democracy.

RIAS also exploited the Soviet Union's dominance of the East German government. On the May 19, 1951 broadcast of *Werktag der Zone*, the commentator

⁷⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁷¹ Ibid., 38.

⁷² See for example, Ernst Reuter's speech to the SPD from March of 1947, in which he proclaimed the SPD was both an international party and a Marxist party while also criticizing the SED for nationalist tendencies. Ernst Reuter, "Referat auf der Funktionärversammlung der Berliner SPD im Admiralspalast," March 1, 1947, *Ernst Reuter: Schriften, Reden, Band III*, 137.

declared, “You keep asking yourselves: Why this ruthless exploitation of the labor forces? Why isn’t the raising of norms accompanied by better provisions for the workers? You must understand this: The entire industry of the Soviet Zone is undergoing a basic change, at Moscow’s demand.”⁷³ The Soviet government, RIAS contended, was forcing East Germany to become an industrial state, despite the fact that Germany’s industrial centers had traditionally been the Ruhr. Further compounding the foolishness of the Soviet’s plans was that its occupation authorities had already dismantled and plundered what industrial capacity East Germany actually had.⁷⁴ Drawing on memories of the industrial and material requisitions during the Soviet occupation of Germany, RIAS emphasized that the SED was nothing more than pawns of the Soviet Union. RIAS argued that workers were forced to enter into collective contracts not to protect and guarantee their rights but to serve the exploitive foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

Critically, RIAS’s broadcasts had an effect upon workers in the GDR. In April 1951, the FDGB attempted to convince workers to take Sunday shifts to make up for low rates of production. RIAS encouraged workers to resist. On April 26, 1951, the SED organ *Neues Deutschland* reported that the FDGB (Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) had concluded that the extra shifts were no longer needed.⁷⁵ While RIAS acknowledged that this resistance was not due solely to its broadcasts, it nevertheless considered it an important expression of radio’s effectiveness. As Ewing wrote:

⁷³ *Werktag der Zone*, (Hereafter WdZ.), May 19, 1951, quoted in *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 15.

⁷⁴ *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 15.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-21.

For the second time within six months, they [the workers] had forced the FDGB to make a public retreat. For the second time within six months, they had won a clear-cut victory over their oppressors. The psychological aspect of this triumph should not be under-estimated. It portended a re-awakened self-consciousness that might—as we saw it in 1951—be important to the West. It had demonstrated for the second time that within the limitations of passive resistance under Soviet Zone conditions, tangible successes could be achieved.⁷⁶

RIAS's goals went beyond simply encouraging passive resistance. Tangible results were critical. But the station was also interested in a psychological factor. Wrote Ewing: "It was RIAS's task to make them conscious of the psychological and political aspects of their action. Only if they understood these aspects could the victory be made to work for them on the major issues: the collective contracts."⁷⁷ In an April 27, 1951 broadcast, RIAS declared that, " 'The indisputable fact is that the government backed down before the workers.'"⁷⁸ Thus, RIAS imparted significance to the workers' actions. Whatever the reasons behind the SED decision to abandon pursuing Sunday shifts, RIAS made a concerted effort to convince listeners that the workers' passive resistance had been integral. Throughout the remainder of the summer of 1951, RIAS stressed that each day the collective contracts' implementation was delayed was evidence of the workers' abilities to resist the orders of the SED. Furthermore, as broadcast in *Werktag der Zone* in early July, the station implored listeners to, " '...stay on the watch...Don't let yourselves be split up into little groups that can easily be put under pressure.' "⁷⁹ When

⁷⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁹ WdZ, July 1951 (Exact broadcast date not specified), cited in *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 30.

the contracts were finally imposed in July, Ewing pointed out that “All the expenditure of manpower to make it seem that the contracts were accepted by the workers had been useless.”⁸⁰ By forcing the SED to impose the contracts, without popular consent, East German workers had achieved a seemingly small yet significant victory.

Ewing’s language here is reminiscent of the type of rhetoric broadcast by RIAS that bothered many listeners during the blockade: namely attempting to interpret SED policies as evidence of weakness and failure. Yet, Ewing’s report clearly demonstrates that RIAS believed it had played an influential role in influencing the actions and attitudes of East Germans’ attitudes. This opinion was emphasized in another report from Ewing to the US High Commission in Germany from 1952 that declared, “It is widely recognized in Germany that RIAS played the leading part in a major Communist set-back in 1951.”⁸¹

East German newspapers and SED Politbüro meeting minutes also reveal that the station was having an effect upon the East German populace. The August 7, 1951 issue of *Thüringer Volk* specifically named RIAS as the source of arguments of class enemies and opponents of the collective contracts.⁸² On September 11, 1951, the official party organ *Neues Deutschland* reiterated these arguments, noting RIAS’s aspersions were the lies of the enemies of the German people.⁸³ In a January 1952 meeting of the SED Politbüro, the listening to RIAS in East Germany was addressed as a critical issue that

⁸⁰ *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 30.

⁸¹ *Current Informational Report: RIAS Campaign Against Communist Collective Contracts*, HICOG, April 10, 1952, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, F 304-01-04/0004 61.31 1/93/2.

⁸² *Thüringer Volk*, August 7, 1951, cited in *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 32.

⁸³ *Neues Deutschland*, September 11, 1951, cited in *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 33.

needed to be confronted and dealt with immediately.⁸⁴ While the meeting did not cite the collective contracts broadcasts specifically, it is almost certain that the station's broadcasts during the Summer of 1951 were on many meeting participants' minds as they discussed the "lies" and "aspersions" being broadcast by the enemy stations with aim of sabotaging the peaceful construction of the GDR.⁸⁵ While it is impossible to ascertain what exact role RIAS played in individuals' decision making when they chose to resist the collective contracts, it is important to note that both RIAS and the SED were firmly convinced that the station's influence was decisive. As Ewing concluded, "The point is that a small editorial staff equipped with a transmitter of sufficient power can put a huge Communist propaganda machine on the defensive."⁸⁶ As will be seen in Chapter Five, the SED propaganda machine strongly reacted to RIAS's success.

RIAS's broadcasts linked accurate reporting with the principle of engagement. The tone of reporters during broadcasts of *Werktag der Zone* and *Berlin spricht zur Zone* was not that of a detached observer, but of a committed advocate of East German rights and freedoms. RIAS styled itself as an active participant in East German politics as well as a partner and ally of the East German people sharing in the collective struggle against the SED and Soviet Union.

From a Station in West Berlin to a West Berlin Station: The transformation of NWDR Berlin into Sender Freies Berlin

⁸⁴ Anlage 4 zum Protokoll no. 87 vom Januar 15, 1952, BAB, Protokolle des Politbüro des Zentralkomitees SED, SAPMO, DY 30/ IV2/2/ 187.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ *An Analysis of the RIAS Campaign Against the Soviet Zone Collective Contracts*, 45.

The founding of Sender Freies Berlin in 1954 ended RIAS's monopoly as West Berlin's primary radio station. The new station's relationship with RIAS was a collegial rivalry in which personnel often left one station for the other while at the same time both stations shared important departments, most notably the music department.⁸⁷ At the same time, SFB made a concerted effort to present a distinctive voice for West Berlin as the city's sole, independent radio station. Thus, the debates surrounding its creation and the station's participation in the general political dialogue then taking place over Berlin's airwaves merits our attention.

Between 1945 and 1954, West Berlin had no radio station under German control. What would become Sender Freies Berlin (Radio Free Berlin) was originally the Berlin station house of Northwest German Radio (NWDR), the large West German station created by the British occupation authorities in 1945.⁸⁸ Unlike RIAS, NWDR Berlin never enjoyed the full commitment of the British in terms of funding and support. For the British and the German controllers who overtook the management of NWDR in 1948, the main purpose of the Berlin affiliate was to broadcast NWDR programs to Berlin and East Germany. Since NWDR was created to provide programming for all of Germany, its Berlin programs lacked the local quality provided by RIAS. During the blockade, a period in which Berlin was a particularly important topic, NWDR devoted about only 17% of its programming to issues concerning the city.⁸⁹ Consequently it was not as

⁸⁷ In 1954, the RIAS Symphony Orchestra became the Berlin Radio Symphony. It performs to this day as the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester.

⁸⁸ Peter von Rüden and Hans-Ulrich Wagner ed., *Die Geschichte des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks*, (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2005), 13-86 and Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 88-112.

⁸⁹ Anja Schäfers, "'In Berlin war eben überhaupt nichts unpolitisch,'" Der NWDR-Berlin bis zur Gründung des SFB," in *Die Geschichte des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks*, ed. Peter von Rüden and Hans-Ulrich Wagner, 356.

popular as RIAS. As Anja Schäfers notes, “The NWDR General Directory wanted to support a broadcaster in Berlin, but not a Berlin Broadcaster.”⁹⁰

Both HICOG and RIAS opposed the first proposals to create a West Berlin station. The first, presented in 1950, proposed transforming the NWDR station house into a fairly autonomous affiliate called Deutscher Rundfunk Berlin (DRB). However, the West Berlin Senate rejected the proposal since it meant the station would not be completely independent, but would remain an outlet of NWDR.⁹¹ Another proposal, from the same year, suggested using the city’s drahtfunk network (first used for RIAS broadcasts in 1946) to establish a small radio operation called Berliner Werbefunk. The plan, sponsored by a local Social Democratic official named Willy Kressmann, lacked necessary financial resources.⁹² Furthermore, its pro-Social Democratic slant and lack of professional guidelines and resources troubled US officials. As the US High Commission’s Radio Branch Chief, Hans Meyer, noted in a memo from June 29, 1950,

According to the plans revealed by Herr Kressmann in his press conference the news coverage of the future Drahtfunk organization would lack any basis of accurateness and reliability. No realistic sources would be available and no responsible editing is intended. Composing news broadcasts from such ill defined sources as ‘quotations from newspapers etc.’ opens the door for irresponsible reporting and untruthfulness: Attempts at competition with inadequate facilities is bound to lead into a practice of uncontrolled sensationalism.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid., 357.

⁹¹ Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 123.

⁹² Memorandum from Hans B. Meyer to Shepard Stone, Convery Egan, and Charles Lewis, June 29, 1950, NARA RG 466 High Commission for Germany (HICOG) Berlin Element Public Affairs Division Classified Subject Files 1949-1953, Entry 176, 72/9/01-72/9/03, Box 7.

⁹³ Ibid.

In making his argument against the Berliner Werbefunk, Meyer focused on the journalistic principles promoted by RIAS: professional reporters and editors, accurate reporting, and the need to avoid sensationalism. The last point was particularly pertinent to the situation in Berlin. As Meyer noted: "There is no need to stress the dangers of such reporting in any political tense situation such as have been and will be recurrent in Berlin. An irresponsible broadcasting organization might have done unmeasurable damage on such occasions as the great anti-blockade demonstration, the May day rallies or the FDJ meeting."⁹⁴ Meyer reiterated these concerns in a letter to HICOG's Public Relations Branch, writing, "Communist activities in the East Sector and communist pressure from the East Zone are more than likely to create recurrent situations of danger and tension in the city. Any irresponsible or sensationalist reporting over the radio may lead to incidents, panic or undesirable effects if and when such situation will reoccur." Meyer went on to note that there was no way to guarantee that the reporting from the proposed station would match the standards and quality of NWDR or RIAS.⁹⁵

The speed with which radio could deliver a report was of particular concern. While newspaper stories could be retracted, it was much more difficult to manage and refute a false piece of information being broadcast over the airwaves. US High Commissioner John McCloy concurred. In a letter written to Berlin Commandant General Maxwell Taylor from June 17, 1950, McCloy wrote, "It is strong view of Public Affairs, HICOG that continuing critical East-West complications make it imperative that Western Berlin broadcasting situation be under tight control, that no new operations be

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Memo from Hans B. Meyer to K.T. Downs, PuB HICOG, Berlin Elements, Radio Branch, ISD, PAO, HICOG, July 17, 1950, NARA RG 466 (HICOG) Berlin Element Public Affairs Division Classified Subject Files 1949-1953, Entry 176, 72/9/01-72/9/03, Box 7.

encouraged or advanced pending further notice.”⁹⁶ Consequently, the concerns about control of radio in West Berlin revolved around a fear that a lack of control could be manipulated by the Soviets or SED. Both McCloy and Meyer demonstrated wariness with regards to what could and should be broadcast over radio airwaves in Berlin. For both men, public and HICOG stations like NWDR and RIAS were better equipped, both in terms of finances and personal resources, to handle major stories. RIAS reporters may have had considerable freedom and independence in what and how they chose to report. But this freedom was only possible, in the American’s eyes, as long as it existed within the framework of an adequately staffed and funded professional institution that could effectively and responsibly edit and check stories and prevent sensational broadcasts. Thus, the Berliner Werbefunk’s lack of an adequate institutional foundation was the principle reason for US opposition to the venture. The Cold War continued to shape the development of broadcasting in the former capital city.

If West Berlin was to have a radio station, it would have to be a public one under the oversight and management of the West Berlin municipal government. Initially, the US and RIAS were opposed to this plan as well. On July 11, 1950, RIAS’s Program Director Ruth Gambke (herself German) sent a detailed memo to Governing Mayor Ernst Reuter noting that another station in West Berlin would be superfluous. For all intents and purposes, Gambke noted, the Intendants of West Germany’s radio stations considered RIAS the West Berlin broadcaster. West Berliners respected the station for its programming aimed at students, unions, and its reporting on economic and political affairs. 700 of RIAS’s employees were Germans. Just 4 were American. The staff was a

⁹⁶ Telegram from McCloy for “Taylro (sic),” June 17, 1950, “New Berlin Broadcasting sta.,” NARA, RG 466, (HICOG), Berlin Element Public Affairs Division Classified Subject Files 1949-1953, Entry 176, 72/9/01-72/9/03, Box 7.

German staff. For all intents and purposes, Gambke asserted, RIAS *was* the station for West Berlin. Gambke also noted that having the station under American control was highly advantageous to West Berlin. Since RIAS was funded by the State Department, the city effectively had a public station without having to pay for it itself. Most importantly, Gambke noted that much of RIAS's popularity in the GDR was due to the fact that listeners felt that the force of the United States was behind it. Because the US was the only power capable of confronting the Soviet Union and effecting any change in the Eastern Zone, RIAS broadcasts carried far greater weight than the broadcasts of a hypothetical independent West Berlin station. RIAS was popular, affordable, and effective precisely because it was an American funded operation.⁹⁷

It should be remembered that RIAS and HICOG's opposition to a Berlin broadcaster was not based on a desire to dominate West Berlin broadcasting and insure that West Germans had no voice. Rather, the reluctance to support a private venture stemmed from the wish to insure a station remained under the control of individuals HICOG felt it could trust to report news accurately and responsibly. In light of the situation in early Cold War Berlin, in which both East German and Soviet observers could interpret anything broadcast by Western stations as the official dictates of the Western governments, such a concern was not unfounded. Thus, when the West Berlin Senate began making official proposals for a public station, RIAS began to look more favorably on the prospect of a new station.

Despite US support however, the process of creating a West Berlin station was a long one. This was due to a variety of factors, including opposition from NWDR, the

⁹⁷ Letter from Ruth Gambke, Program Director RIAS Berlin, to the Öberbürgermeister [Ernst Reuter], July 11, 1950, LAB Berlin, Der Regierende Buergermeister von Berlin/Senatskanzlei: Vorbereitung zur Errichtung des Sender Freies Berlin, B Rep 2/3132.

need to acquire a suitable wavelength for broadcasting, and finding adequate means for financing the project.⁹⁸ Since NWDR Berlin had the necessary financial resources and facilities, the West Berlin government focused most of its plans on transferring the station house into what would become Sender Freies Berlin. NWDR, however, was reluctant to give up its presence in Berlin, especially since this would reduce its ability to reach listeners in East Germany. However, by the fall of 1953, the West Berlin Senate had succeeded in acquiring appropriate broadcast frequencies and a means of funding the station using West Berliner licensing fees. On November 20, 1953, the West Berlin Senate finally passed a law creating Sender Freies Berlin.⁹⁹ A year later, following months of negotiations between NWDR and other parties, SFB began broadcasting as the first independent West Berlin station.

In terms of structure, SFB mirrored West Germany's other public stations. The November 20, 1953 law creating the station stated that the station could not be used as a "tool of a government, group, or an individual personality...."¹⁰⁰ The Berlin Senate held only legal oversight responsibilities. For all intents and purposes, SFB was an independent public broadcaster.¹⁰¹ As with stations like NWDR, the principle authority at SFB was an oversight panel made up of a Radio Council and an Administrative Council. No member of the West Berlin government had the right to serve on either council.¹⁰² An Intendant, (who initially doubled as Programming Director), an economics director, and a technical director oversaw programming and day-to-day

⁹⁸ The transformation of NWDR Berlin into SFB is recounted in detail by Erik Heinrich in his dissertation *Vom NWDR Berlin zum SFB: Rundfunkpolitik in Berlin 1946-1954*. Diss. Berlin: 1985. See as well Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 119-141, and Anja Schäfers, " 'In Berlin war eben überhaupt nichts unpolitisch,' Der NWDR-Berlin bis zur Gründung des SFB," in Peter von Rüden and Hans-Ulrich Wagner ed., *Die Geschichte des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks*.

⁹⁹ Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 138.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 138.

¹⁰¹ Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 141.

¹⁰² Ibid., 139.

operations.¹⁰³ Two years later, in order to grant the Intendant more authority, the station was restructured so that the Intendant was the only chief executive.¹⁰⁴ Beneath the Intendant was a Program Director responsible for overseeing station programming. Programming was in turn divided into departments for culture, politics, music, youth and education, radio plays, and entertainment. These departments were similar to those at RIAS, with the notable exception that the political department was not separated from the other departments as at the American station.

Although SFB focused on West Berlin interests and concerns, its programming profile was not dramatically different from RIAS's. Like RIAS, SFB provided a wide variety of programs designed to serve both West German and East German listeners. These included *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen* (Between Today and Tomorrow), *Hier spricht Berlin*, *Zur Politik der Gegenwart*, *Alte und Neue Heimat*, and *Unteilbares Deutschland*.¹⁰⁵ The station also attracted talent from RIAS, most notably Mathias Walden. The RIAS commentator left the American station in 1956 to become a member of SFB's foreign affairs department. Though Walden noted to a confidant that the decision was a difficult one, especially in light of the good working atmosphere at RIAS, Walden nevertheless made the decision to leave because SFB afforded him the chance to report on topics more suited to his personal interests and skills.¹⁰⁶ Upon arriving at the station, however, Walden reflected at the lack of resources the West Berlin public broadcaster had in comparison to the American station. Writing to a colleague, he noted, "Finally, you also have the standard of two competing Berlin stations—RIAS and SFB—

¹⁰³ Organisational Plan of SFB, August 30, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 7419.

¹⁰⁴ Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 143.

¹⁰⁵ Abteilung Politik Sendung, August 7-August 14, 1961, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 6729-2.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Mathias Walden to Wuttge, June 28, 1956, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 316.

and know which one ranks behind the other. Marquardt from the News Department, who deserted RIAS a few months before me, reckoned, it was as if one had earlier worked with a hot water boiler and now each morning must rend before shaved wood. But that alone is not decisive. The technical limitations have not led me to regret my choice.”¹⁰⁷

A comparison of RIAS programming with that of SFB’s drawn up by SFB editor Rolf Menzel shows that both stations devoted equal airtime to news. In 1956, roughly 27% of RIAS airtime was devoted to political issues, compared to 28% at SFB. The marked differences were in entertainment programming, with RIAS devoting roughly 45% of its airtime to “Unterhaltung und Tanzmusik” (Entertainment and Dance Music), compared to 29% at SFB. The greater amount of time devoted to spoken programming (50%, compared to RIAS 43%) troubled Menzel, who felt more time needed to be spent with musical programming.¹⁰⁸ Using RIAS as the point of comparison revealed both a concern with what the other station presented as well as a high regard for the station’s broadcasts. A comparison of news topics also indicates a common conception between the two stations concerning what stories needed to be addressed. For example, a chart drawn up by SFB presenting all the news stories sent on April 9, 1957 indicated that both stations reported on the same topics: Great Britain and the Suez Canal, Soviet atomic testing, and political changes in Indonesia, disarmament, US aid to Saudi Arabia, and Iran.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Mathias Walden to Bölling, July 25, 1956, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 316. “Schließlich haben auch Sie den Masstab beider in Berlin konkurrierenden Häuser—RIAS und SFB—und wissen, worin das eine dem anderen nachsteht. Marquardt von den Nachrichten, der einige Monate vor mir bei RIAS desertierte, meinte, es sei so, als ob man bisher mit einem modernen Heiss—wasser Boiler gearbeitet habe und nun jeden Morgen vor dem Rasieren Holz spalten müsse. Aber das allein entscheidet nicht. Bisher habe ich die selbstgewählte, natürlich nur rein technische Beschränkung nicht bereut.”

¹⁰⁸ Rolf Menzel to Intendent Geerdes, [May 1957], DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4386.

¹⁰⁹ Comparative Chart: RIAS Nachrichten and SFB, April 9, 1957, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913.

Unlike RIAS, with its focus on the GDR, SFB's creators, backers, and staff intended SFB to be a neutral broadcaster that would address the needs and interests of as wide a demographic as possible. This approach was based on principles laid down since the late 1940s with the creation of NWDR and other German stations.¹¹⁰ A consequence of this decision was that many interest groups and individuals often felt SFB was not doing enough to address specific issues and problems. Invariably, these objections often stemmed from the belief that SFB was not sufficiently anti-communist. On September 5, 1958 for example, the Swiss anticommunist newspaper, *Die Weltwoche*, accused SFB of ignoring East German issues, claimed it was not sufficiently anti-totalitarian, and charged that the West Berlin broadcaster was censoring its reports to avoid antagonizing the Soviet Union.¹¹¹ The story's writer, Martin Pfeideler, reiterated his arguments a month later in a letter to SFB, writing, "In this context, it is illuminating, that the editors utter Bolshevism (ante portas) in the same breath as Nazism (the comparative phantom). And honestly: the anti-Nazi commentaries show boldness and verve, but not the anti-bolshevik commentaries."¹¹² Thus, Pfeideler believed that while SFB devoted considerable airtime to criticizing the Nazi Past, it failed to adequately confront the current totalitarian menace.

SFB responded to the *Weltwoche*'s assertions on September 12, 1958. The broadcast, given by Mathias Walden, shows us a great deal about how the station conceived political reporting. First, Walden stressed the wide variety of programs for

¹¹⁰ Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 95-106

¹¹¹ Letter from Mathias Walden to the *Weltwoche*, September 12, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913.

¹¹² Letter from Dr. L. Stucki, Redaktion *Weltwoche* to Walter Geerdes and Rolf Menzel, SFB October 25, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913. "In diesem Zusammenhang ist aufschlussreich, dass die Redaktion den Bolschewismus (ante portas) in einem Atem nennt mit dem Nazismus (dem vergleichswisen Phantom). Und wirklich: die antinazistischen Kommentare des Senders zeigen Mut und Verve, nicht aber die antibolschewistischen."

East Germany. Every day, the station devoted an hour and a half of programming aimed specifically at the population of the GDR.¹¹³ The station's program, *Unteilbares Deutschland* ("Germany Indivisible") was also broadcast weekly, as well as evening commentaries. Walden noted, "More than 50% of SFB's broadcast time allotted for politics—with the exception of news—and the current affairs programming—are reserved for contributions for listeners in the Zone."¹¹⁴ On the assertion that SFB was not adequately "anti-Bolshevik" and wished to avoid conflict with totalitarianism, Walden responded that, "In fact, daily broadcasts demonstrate that SFB seeks out and maintains this debate. Incidentally, SFB does not limit this debate only to Bolshevism, but rather feels obligated to expand the debate to all forms of totalitarianism, especially Nazism."¹¹⁵ SFB also asserted that it based its broadcasts on commonly accepted standards that balanced the personal opinions of commentators with facts. Articles in the East German press, notably the papers of the SED, demonstrated the station's effectiveness and its popularity amongst East German listeners.

Two days earlier, SFB Chief Editor Rolf Menzel had also stated these arguments in a letter to the editor of *Die Weltwoche*, declaring the contention that SFB wished to avoid confrontations with totalitarianism as "grotesque."¹¹⁶ To question SFB's resolve on this point was to question its fundamental purpose of serving the people "in central Germany." ("Mitteldeutschland") Menzel also touched on a challenge that RIAS faced:

¹¹³ Letter from Mathias Walden an die Redaktion der *Weltwoche*, September 12, 1958.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., "Mehr als 50% der gesamten politischen Sendezeit des SFB—ausgenommen die Nachrichten—und die Zeitfunksendungen—sind den Beiträgen für die Zonenhörer vorbehalten."

¹¹⁵ Ibid., "Im übrigen beschränkt der SFB diese Auseinandersetzung mit dem Totalitarismus nicht auf den Bolschewismus, sondern hält es für seine selbstverständliche Pflicht, sie auf alle Arten des Totalitarismus—besonders aber den Nazismus—auszudehnen."

¹¹⁶ Letter from Rolf W. Menzel to Lorenz Stucki, September 10, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913. "Eine solche Behauptung ist geradezu grotesk."

how to work as an advocate of the East German people and oppose Communism without appearing to be a propaganda station. As he noted:

Incidentally, the central German population, which has been exposed to totalitarian propaganda for thirteen years twice over now, will not be served with patriotic slogans from a secure port. They want factual reporting about world events, they want to hear the arguments, that are required in the grueling day-to-day struggle against the SED dictatorship, they want to remain aligned with the free West—which unfortunately often gives enough for self-sufficiency. The political editors of SFB and with them all of Sender Freies Berlin feel obligated to these goals.¹¹⁷

Thus, like RIAS, SFB's editors were keenly aware that presenting an open, polemical anti-communist position based on "anti-bolshevism" threatened to alienate East German listeners. Credibility was far more effective, especially in light of the fact that so many listeners were cynical and mistrusting of overtly political broadcasts. Menzel reiterated the belief that factual reporting was the most effective means of reaching listeners in the GDR. Thus, if SFB's broadcasts did not appear to be overtly anti-communist, they nevertheless were dedicated to undermining the GDR and forging a bond between East and West Germans.

The dispute with *Weltwoche* was a minor one. It came, however, just months after a larger dispute involving the Berlin Federation of Expellees and the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs. The problem stemmed from SFB's decision to cut the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., "Im übrigen ist der mitteldeutschen Bevölkerung, die jetzt schon zweimal 13 Jahre der totalitären Propaganda ausgesetzt ist, wenig mit patriotischen Schlagworten vom sicheren Port aus gedient, sie will sachlich informiert werden über die Vorgänge in der Welt, sie will die Argumente hören, die sie in dem täglichen aufreibenden Kampf gegen die SED-Diktatur benötigt, sie will den freien Westen--der sich leider oft genug zu selbstgenügsam gibt--verbunden bleiben, diesen Zielen fühlt sich die politische Redaktion des SFB und damit er SENDER FREIES BERLIN verpflichtet."

broadcast time of one of its broadcasts *Alte und Neue Heimat*, a cultural-political program about the culture and society of those territories of western Poland that had once been a part of the German Reich.

Producing a program about the territories ceded to Poland and about the German speakers expelled from those territories during the final months of World War II was a politically controversial one. In a period where the West German government refused to recognize the legitimacy of the cession and referred to the territories as “regions under Polish administration,” speaking of an “old and new homeland” was in itself a politically charged topic. In 1952, RIAS rejected a proposal from the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs to establish similar programming due to its politically charged nature. In explaining RIAS’s decision to the Ministry, Program Director Eberhard Schütz touched on the politically charged atmosphere of Berlin as grounds for not presenting a program devoted specifically to either the ceded territories or the expellees themselves.¹¹⁸ While Schütz noted that issues such as the people, art, and music of the ceded territories were addressed in RIAS’s cultural and political programs, he nevertheless also expressed concern about how the proposed program could be misinterpreted by listeners in both the GDR and West Germany. The various interest groups representing the expellees were also prone to dramatic and propagandistic statements.¹¹⁹

Perhaps in light of these concerns, the SFB’s program avoided overt political assertions. Nevertheless, *Alte und Neue Heimat* was not an apolitical program. Although the program never advocated the reacquisition of the lost territories, it did sympathize

¹¹⁸ Letter from Eberhard Schütz, RIAS Politische Direktion to the leader of the Press and Information Center of the Federal Ministry for All-German Questions, October 15, 1952, BAK, B 137 3.5.

¹¹⁹ For an overview of the expulsions, see Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), Chapter Seven. For work on the expellee lobby in West Germany, see Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe 1945-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

with the difficulties faced by German communities that were expelled and those that continued to live on the other side of the Oder-Neisse Line. The program referred to the lost territories as “German Areas under Polish Administration” and as “east Germany.” Predominantly, programs focused on the fading German cultural character of the territories of East Prussia and Silesia. On April 24, 1957 for example, the program noted with dismay that although the Göttinger Arbeitskreis ostdeutscher Wissenschaftler (Göttingen Study Group for East German Scholars) reckoned there were, “more than a million Germans currently still live in the Polish administered Oder-Neisse Region and in Peoples’ Poland,” only 60,000 were considered part of the German minority by the Polish government.¹²⁰ The broadcast on September 28, 1957 noted the decline in German language schools in the region.¹²¹ Another program, broadcast on May 17, 1958, focused on a Westphalian who had opened a library devoted to the literature of “East” Germany in an attempt to preserve the cultural heritage of the ceded territories.¹²² Another, broadcast on April 19, 1958, examined how Polish bureaucrats used the term “Autochthon” rather than “German” to refer to the German speakers of its western regions in order to mask the German character of the area.¹²³ A number of programs touched on the deterioration of German memorials and landmarks located throughout what was once East Prussia and Silesia. During its February 15, 1958, the program noted that only 900 of the 2,000 cultural sites in the western regions of Poland were protected by landmark status.¹²⁴ The broadcast stressed that this threatened the cultural heritage for

¹²⁰ “Alte und Neue Heimat” (ANH), April 27, 1957, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4922. “Mehr als eine Million Deutsche lebt zur Zeit noch in den polnisch verwalteten Oder-Neisse-Gebieten und in Volkspolen, teilt der ‘Göttinger Arbeitskreis ostdeutscher Wissenschaftler’ mit.”

¹²¹ ANH, September 28, 1957, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4922.

¹²² ANH, May 17, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4922.

¹²³ ANH, April 19, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4922.

¹²⁴ ANH, February, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4922.

the region, and not just for the Germans who had lived there. Of particular concern, however, was the Tannenberg monument erected to commemorate the German World War I victory over the Russian Army and destroyed at the end of World War II. On November 16, 1957 a report chronicled the vain efforts of a Canadian journalist to find the site, only to come across the abandoned debris of the memorial. The language of the journalist's report is striking at points. Speaking about one of the monument's statues, the report declared, "The statue lies with its face in the rubble---a more symbolic situation is hardly imaginable." The report also noted the gleeful reaction of a local Pole when asked about the significance of the memorial. " 'The Germans lie finished!,' And again, a grin appeared across his whole face."¹²⁵ The report clearly bemoaned the loss of the monument.

The same story touched on another theme that dominated many *Alte und Neue Heimat* broadcasts. This was that the new borders were artificial constructs and the result of nearly half a century of population and border changes that disrupted the natural state of affairs in east-central Europe. For example, the same November 16, 1958 story touching on the remains of the Tannenberg monument noted that many of the towns in East Prussia and Silesia such as Allenstein/Olsztyn and Neidenburg/Nidzica were still in ruins and depopulated, thirteen years after the end of World War II.¹²⁶ In general, "Alte und Neue Heimat" sought to depict the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe as part of a decades long process of deportations that had begun before World War I. Thus, the role of the Nazis and the German minorities in helping to instigate the backlash that led to these expulsions in the immediate postwar period was downplayed in favor of

¹²⁵ ANH, November 16, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4922.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

seeing the expellees as fellow victims of these deportations. The opening of a broadcast from August 3, 1957 clearly illustrates this approach:

The new national migrations of our time began in 1912 as the so-called Balkan War raged in South-Eastern Europe. But a harrowing number were undertaken at the beginning of the Second World War. In the years of bloody conflict, 22 million Europeans lost their homeland. And after the end of the war, a further 32 million turned their backs to the old continent.¹²⁷

The programs considered the German expellees victims of a broader process of migration and deportation. This process even included mass emigration to the United States.

Again, there was little consideration for the specific reasons for the deportations. The broadcast then presented a broad overview of the different national groups that had been expelled or relocated over the past four decades. These included 900,000 Greeks, Turks, and Bulgarians expelled from the Balkans during the Balkan War, 1.2 million Germans forced to leave territories lost through the Treaty of Versailles, 6 million people deported from European Russia to Siberia, 1 million Volksdeutsche forced to migrate to Hitler's Greater Reich, nine million people from various European states conscripted as slave laborers in Germany during World War II, and thirteen million Germans expelled from western Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Hungary. Incredibly, this long litany of expelled populations makes no mention of the six million Jews deported and murdered by

¹²⁷ ANH, August 3, 1957, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4922. "Die neue Völkerwanderung unserer Tage setzte im Jahre 1912 ein, als der sogenannte Balkan-Krieg in Südosteuropa wütete. Aber einen erschütternden Umfang nahm sie erst mit Beginn des zweiten Weltkrieges an. In den Jahren der blutigen Auseinandersetzung verliessen 22 Millionen Europäer ihre angestammte Heimat. Und nach dem Ende dieses Krieges kehrten weitere 32 Millionen dem alten Kontinent den Rücken."

the Nazi government. The closest the story gets is when it mentions 750,000 “Germans, Austrians, and Spanish” forced to flee their homelands because of political persecution. Not only did the description of the expulsions gloss over the specific historical factors that led to them, but it also failed to acknowledge the most desecrutive and murderous of these expulsions.¹²⁸

Alte und Neue Heimat focused on addressing as broad a demographic as possible, and presented a mixture of news and culture on the German communities that had once lived outside of the two Germanys. Thus, the program was not only concerned with the expellees from East Prussia and Silesia, but also Germans that had lived in Hungary, the Ukraine, and Russia. Despite this, organizations such as the Federation of Expellees looked upon the program as *its* show, as a program that represented its interests and concerns. As can be seen, the program was highly sympathetic to the problems and concerns of the Germans expelled from western Poland. It saw the region as still fundamentally German, and though it did not openly advocate the return of the territories to Germany, the program nevertheless expressed concern for the fading German cultural identity of the area.

When SFB decided to curtail the show’s running time from 30 minutes to 15 minutes in July 1958, it spurred uproar from the organizations and interest groups representing the expellees. As with the dispute with *Weltwoche*, the debate illustrates the central tenets of SFB’s political programming. On July 23, 1958 the Berlin State Federation of Expellees wrote a letter condemning the decision. Reminding SFB that the Federation was one of the largest political groups in Berlin, the letter requested a personal

¹²⁸ Ibid.

meeting between the Federation and SFB Intendant Walter Geerdes.¹²⁹ The move also elicited protests from the Association of Agriculture, the expellee newspapers *Ostpreussenzeitung* and *Unser Schlesische Heimat*, and two West German ministries. On the programming cut, the head of the Association for Agriculture, Baron von Manteuffel-Szoegé, declared that if SFB, as the sole independent German station within the geographical area of East Germany, demonstrated an indifference to the topic by reducing the programming time, then it would be seen as a signal to other West German stations to curtail programming on the topic of expellees as well.¹³⁰ Both the Minister for All German Affairs, Ernst Lammer and the Minister for Expellees, Refugees, and Those Affected by War, Theodor Oberländer, expressed regret at the prospect of a shortened program and beseeched Geerdes not to go through with the programming change.¹³¹ Oberländer even suggested adding another half hour block of the program each week.¹³² Far more critical were the expellee newspapers, especially the *Ostpreussenzeitung*, which declared on August 2, 1958 that “the German capital’s station has an unclear, fearful, crooked, cosmopolitan position with no line. It bows to all sides, and above all makes sure not to anger the Kremlin! But even that is done without conviction.”¹³³ The paper went on to assert that, “It does not want to anger any listeners, and does not feel obligated

¹²⁹ Letter from the Berliner Landesverband der Vertriebenen to the Intendant of Sender Freies Berlin, Walter Geerdes, July 24, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913.

¹³⁰ Letter from Baron von Manteuffel-Szoegé to Walter Geerdes, August 8, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913.

¹³¹ Letter from Theodor Oberländer, Bundesminister für Vertriebenen, Flüchtlinge, und Kriegsgeschädigte to Walter Geerdes, August 13, 1958, and Letter from Ernst Lammer, Bundesminister für gesamtdeutsche Fragen, August 23, 1958, to Walter Geerdes, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913.

¹³² Letter from Oberländer to Geerdes, August 13, 1958.

¹³³ Excerpts from *Ostpreussenzeitung*, August 2, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913. “Der Sender der deutschen Hauptstadt hat eine unklare ängstliche, verwaschen kosmopolitische Haltung, die keine Linie hat. Verbeugungen nach allen Seiten, und vor allem den Kreml nicht verärgern! Aber auch das wiederum nicht aus Überzeugung.”

to any of them.”¹³⁴ The station, critics asserted, feared angering the Soviets and thus aimed to pursue a course of weak neutrality.

By shortening the broadcast by fifteen minutes, SFB had opened itself to criticism from two federal ministries and several powerful lobbies and newspapers. In one case, critics had claimed the station’s decision was evidence of its weak political convictions and its own fear of the Soviet Union. Yet, SFB had neither canceled the broadcast nor shown signs that it wished to change the broadcast’s content, which, it should be noted, was strongly favorable to the interests and concerns of the German expellees to begin with. Nevertheless, SFB’s response to all of these parties reinforced its mission as a public station focused on objectively serving a broad demographic. In a letter written by SFB Program Director Rolf Menzel to Administration Committee Member Emil Dovifat, Menzel noted that the change was not politically driven, but simply the consequence of providing more time for other types of programs. On the various groups pressuring SFB to reconsider its decision, Menzel noted that the program was aimed at a general audience and focused on a general topic. It was not the program of a single lobbying group pursuing its own goals.¹³⁵ Such groups, Menzel warned, threatened independent broadcasting in their attempts to shift broadcasting to serve extreme goals. Geerdes expressed these sentiments himself in a response to the Berlin Federation of Expellees on August 20, noting that, “All of our broadcasts are construct so that they never address a single specific group, but rather that constructed to appeal to a greater selection of listeners.”¹³⁶ Geerdes also used the opportunity to refuse the assertions made by the

¹³⁴ Ibid., “Er will keinen Hörer verärgern und fühlt sich selbst zu nichts verpflichtet.”

¹³⁵ Letter from Rolf Menzel to Emil Dovifat, August 5, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913.

¹³⁶ Letter from Walter Geerdes to the Berliner Landesverband der Vertriebenen, August 20, 1958, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4913. “Alle unsere Sendungen sind so aufgebaut, daß sie nicht nur einen bestimmten Kreis ansprechen, sondern darüber hinaus bei einem großen Teil der Hörer Anklang finden.”

various expellee newspapers. In light of the constant criticism leveled at SFB by East Germany, Geerdes noted that to describe its reporters as too afraid to take a firm position against the Soviet Union was unfair and unjustified.

Both the disputes with *Weltwoche* and the various Expellee organizations touch on a number of similar themes. First, there was the belief held by SFB's critics that the station was too neutral and lacked the necessary conviction to represent West Berlin and West Germany in the Cold War. Second, SFB defended its position by stressing its fundamental purpose of reaching a broad number of listeners and its refusal to allow any group or critic pressure it to make programming changes. Unlike RIAS, the station did not devote large areas of programming to undermining the Communist system in East Germany. Nevertheless, the station remained a firm critic of the GDR, and as programs like *Alte und Neue Heimat* demonstrate, the station was firmly anti-Soviet. In this regard, SFB's anti-communism was expressed in programs stressing the unity of the German people, such as *Unteilbar Deutschland* and *Alte und Neue Heimat*. Like RIAS, SFB walked a fine line between neutrality and engagement and eschewed anti-Soviet and anti-Communist propaganda. Thus, although SFB attempted to set itself apart from RIAS as a truly independent, German station, the two stations shared many mutual goals and challenges.

The Transformation of Berliner Rundfunk and the Creation of Communist Broadcast Journalism in the German Democratic Republic

Throughout the 1950s, the broadcasting institutions of the German Democratic Republic were in a state of flux. Between 1949 and 1952, the stations underwent a series of institutional changes. The changes were part of a larger scale process designed to transform the media in the GDR into what Hermann Axen described as “the party’s sharpest weapon.”¹³⁷ In a speech to the SED given in February 1950, Axen laid down the justification for the institutional and personnel changes:

The majority of the party leadership underestimates the significance of the press as the party’s sharpest weapon. On the part of our circle of editors, this corresponds to the present underestimation of their duties and obligations as party functionaries. Many of our editors have adopted, as we call it, an ideology of “pure journalism.”¹³⁸

Axen condemned so-called “pure” or professional journalists for adopting opportunistic bourgeois forms and hindering the transformation of the East German media into a “press of a new type.” Up until that point, Axen commented, too many journalists had underestimated the potency of the media as a means of building socialism in the GDR.¹³⁹ Axen’s speech came just months following the dismissal of Heinz Schmidt from Berliner Rundfunk. Following the dismissals of Schmidt, Bruno Bauer, and Leo Goldhammer in 1949-50, Axen, along with Gerhart Eisler, and Kurt Heiss, led a movement towards placing GDR stations firmly along a socialist path. Their prototypes were the highly

¹³⁷ Hermann Axen, “Die Entwicklung der Parteipresse zu einer Presse von neuem Typus,” February 9-10, 1950, in Holzweißig, *Die schärfste Waffe der Partei*, 220.

¹³⁸ Ibid., “Der Unterschätzung der Bedeutung der Presse als schärfste Waffe der Partei durch die meisten Parteileitungen entspricht die in den Kreisen unserer Redakteure vorhandene Unterschätzung ihre Aufgaben und Pflichten als Parteifunktionäre. Vieler unserer Redakteure hat sich—wie wir es bezeichnen—einer ‘Nur-Journalisten-Ideologie’ bemächtigt....”

¹³⁹ Holzweißig, *Die schärfste Waffe der Partei*, 87-88.

centralized broadcasting institutions of the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁰ In order to achieve this, the SED undertook a series of purges that reduced the personnel strength of the GDR's stations to a third of what it was in 1949.¹⁴¹ To quote historian Christoph Classen, a "climate of denunciation and mutual distrust" ruled the stations during the early 1950s.¹⁴²

The most notable dismissal was Hans Mahle in 1952. His removal as General Intendant of GDR radio represented a fundamental shift in the goals and aims of the SED and East German radio officials. Unlike Schmidt, Bauer, and Goldhammer, who had all spent the war years in western countries, Mahle had spent the Nazi-period in Moscow with Ulbricht and had returned with the Ulbricht group in 1945. He had also been the principle architect of radio in the GDR, a leading member of the DVV, and the first General Intendant of the GDR's radio operations. Despite these credentials, Mahle became the victim of the drive to shape the GDR into a Stalinist state. Since he first became director of radio operations in the Soviet Zone, Mahle had pursued his goals in the spirit of the antifascist coalition. Though an orthodox communist, he nevertheless was opposed to transforming the GDR's radio stations into outlets for SED propaganda, feeling that the only way to compete with Western programming was to produce less ideologically defined radio programs. He also strongly believed that radio needed to address all Germans, not just communists, and needed to be less partisan and openly favorable to the SED. Perhaps most damning was his belief that Germany still needed to develop into a bourgeois democracy before it could embark upon the establishment of

¹⁴⁰ Konrad Dussel, "Die Sowjetisierung des DDR-Rundfunks in den fünfziger Jahren: Die Organisation des Staatlichen Rundfunkkomitees und seine Leitungstätigkeit," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 45 Vol 11, (1997): 992-999.

¹⁴¹ Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 208.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 209.

full socialism. Such an opinion was clearly at odds with the Stalinizing drive of Ulbricht and the SED.¹⁴³

Goldhammer, Bauer, Schmidt, and Mahle were just four of the thousands of individuals either dismissed or purged from their positions in radio. The grounds for dismissal were similar to those cited for Mahle and usually focused on western connections. Many were removed because of their connections to Bauer and Goldhammer, inevitable considering the leading roles the two played with Deutschlandsender and Berliner Rundfunk. The fact that Berliner Rundfunk's studios were physically in West Berlin was also damning, for it meant that its studio workers could not help but have contact with the Western Sectors of the city. Schmidt's decision to import journalists from the Western Zones in 1947 was also attacked and described by Heiss as a "congenital defect."¹⁴⁴ Employees were condemned as spies working for the "anglo-american imperialists." The accusations were not only directed at officials in leadership positions or news editors. Musicians were also targeted, most prominently the entire "Radio-Berlin-Tanzorchester," which the SED considered a source for degenerate Americanism. In 1950, Heiss ordered the orchestra's dissolution.¹⁴⁵

Accompanying the dismissals, the SED began to establish means to monitor and control both the radio stations and their operations. In 1950, the newly created Ministry for State Security (*Stasi*) began to infiltrate the various stations with informers and agents to better monitor the broadcasting activities in the GDR. The *Stasi* were able to employ informants in all areas of radio operations. Along with *Stasi* agents, SED Party Cadres

¹⁴³ Petra Galle, "Ein 'Moskau-Kader' als Sicherheitsrisiko." See as well Arnold *Kalter Krieg im Äther*, 246-252 and Riege, *Einem Traum verpflichtet*, 282-293.

¹⁴⁴ Classen., *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 207.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 205-209.

were also given greater authority and influence over each of the GDR's stations and day-to-day operations, thus insuring both the continued dominance of the party over radio stations and that broadcasts presented the correct ideological interpretation of events.¹⁴⁶

In September of 1952, the GDR dissolved its regional broadcasters and moved all radio operations to East Berlin. Commenting on the change, the GDR's Minister President Otto Grotewohl, declared that the, "new, great task of building the foundations of socialism in the German Democratic Republic make the raising of the political and cultural consciousness of the population necessary."¹⁴⁷ Radio was a critical instrument in achieving this goal. Consequently, Grotewohl and the SED contended, it was necessary to centralize all radio operations in Berlin under a unified, collective administration. The SED replaced East Germany's various regional stations with the prosaically named stations Berlin I, Berlin II, and Berlin III.¹⁴⁸ Each station was given a specific area of responsibility: Berlin I replaced Deutschlandsender as the station designed primarily for West German listeners. Berlin II was directed at the cultural and political elites whereas Berlin III broadcast light entertainment and more popular programming.¹⁴⁹

The same month, the SED abolished the position of General Intendant. Since the SED Department of Agitation had taken over most broadcasting responsibilities since Mahle's dismissal, the post was effectively obsolete. In line with the needs for collective leadership, the SED replaced the post with a State Radio Committee (StRK).¹⁵⁰ The

¹⁴⁶ Daniela Münkkel, "Herrschaftspraxis im Rundfunk der SBZ/DDR: Anspruch—Sicherheit—Grenzen," in *Radiozeiten; Herrschaft, Alltag, Gesellschaft 1924-1960*, ed. Inge MarBolek and Adelheid von Saldern (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999), 83-100.

¹⁴⁷ *Verordnung über die Bildung des Staatlichen Rundfunkkomitees vom 14. August 1952* GBL 52/733, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden, Geschäftsunterlagen, F094-00-00/0003.

¹⁴⁸ Münkkel, "Produktionssphäre," in Adelheid von Saldern and Inge MarBolek ed. *Zuhören und Gehörtwerden II: Radio in der DDR der fünfziger Jahre zwischen Lenkung und Ablenkung*, (Tübingen: edition discord, 1998), 138. See as well Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb*, 46 and Holzweißig, *Die schärfste Waffe der Partei*, 200-201.

¹⁴⁹ Münkkel, "Produktionssphäre" 138-139, Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 218.

¹⁵⁰ Dussel, "Sowjetisierung," 994-996.

thirteen-person committee was given control over all aspects of broadcasting in the German Democratic Republic.¹⁵¹ The makeup included members responsible for music, education, technical issues, television, cultural politics, West Germany, cadres, as well as the chief editors for Berlin I, II, and III. The Committee directed all station operations and insured that they adhered to a Marxist-Leninist approach to the media. At the same time, the committee was also responsible for insuring smooth operations and using all means to imbue “the spirit of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin” into the leadership.¹⁵² The spirit of the broad anti-fascist coalition had given way to a clear declaration that Marxist-Leninist principles were to be the guiding doctrine for East German radio. This change was further emphasized in April of 1953 when the GDR formally transformed the SED controlled ADN wire service into an official state institution.¹⁵³

The reorganization did not last long: Abolishing the local broadcasters had been an unpopular move, and many listeners complained in letters that they simply wanted to hear local news and local sports broadcast.¹⁵⁴ In response, the StRK reorganized the station structures once again in 1956. Local broadcasting was delegated to the newly created Radio DDR, a large broadcaster which also utilized smaller, regional station affiliates throughout the GDR. Berliner Rundfunk once again served East Berlin. Finally, Deutschlandsender was recreated to serve its original purpose as the East German broadcaster for the Federal Republic.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, Heiss’ influence over East German radio declined in favor of Albert Norden, the SED’s Secretary for Agitation

¹⁵¹ *Satzung der Leitung des Staatlichen Rundfunkkomitees*, September 1, 1952, BAB, DR 6/237.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Holzweißig, *Die Schärfste Waffe der Partei*, 33-35.

¹⁵⁴ Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus*, 284.

¹⁵⁵ Munkel, “Produktionssphäre,” 139.

since 1955.¹⁵⁶ However, despite the institutional and personnel changes, the principle that radio was to continue focusing on building a socialist society based on Marxist-Leninist ideology remained.

The purges had led to the removal of most professional reporters from the GDR's radio stations and meant that new editors and reporters needed to be found to replace them. In response, the SED created Radio Schools designed specifically to train broadcast journalists for the GDR. Two schools were created; one in Grünau in 1950, and then at Weimar in 1953. Only 222 individuals graduated from the Radio Schools in a total of just five classes between 1950 and 1955.¹⁵⁷ However, despite the relatively small number of students, an examination of the Radio School's courses, student makeup, examinations, and lessons provides scholars with an excellent overview of what kind of journalists the GDR hoped to create during this period. With the anti-cosmopolitan purges coming to an end, the SED was committed to establishing a Stalinist dictatorship in East Germany dedicated to building a communist society. Radio journalists were to be important participants in achieving this goal.

The most striking and prominent feature of the Radio Schools is the overwhelming influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology over every aspect of instruction. The schools' leaders declared that journalism in the GDR needed to be distinct from both the practices of the National Socialist era as well as from the bourgeois journalism of the west. To be a radio journalist meant not only being able to present and elucidate the goals and policies of the SED to the masses, but also required winning the masses over to the correct political line. Consequently, to be a socialist journalist meant not just a

¹⁵⁶ Dussel, "Sowietisierung," 1000-1001.

¹⁵⁷ Münkler, "Produktionsphäre," 52.

professional commitment, but a personal commitment to both the SED and the state.¹⁵⁸

What is clear from the recruitment goals, lessons, and application reviews at the Radio Schools that the ideal journalist for the SED was capable of mastering, understanding, and debating the principle tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

Examining student applications to the school, one can see the importance that social background and aptitude with Marxist-Leninist ideology played in how candidates were selected for admission. A November 1952 report discussing the school admissions criteria listed “social origin” as the top condition, followed by “political development.” Ability and competency was listed below these criteria.¹⁵⁹ Finding adequate applicants was difficult however. The same report noted that too many students from the previous class needed to be properly reared towards an active political consciousness.¹⁶⁰ The report declared that more students needed to have had experience in an organization “as an agitator” and that at least a fourth of the applicants needed to have attended a party school of some kind.¹⁶¹ An intermediate assessment made of a student in 1954 noted that she was part of a working class family and consequently had a good understanding of the working class. Yet, the positive review did not indicate whether or not the student had an aptitude for radio or journalism. Her good understanding of class issues was more important.¹⁶² In contrast, the administration accused a student who was excluded from the school collective in 1953 of lacking an adequate class-consciousness. The student report noted that his moral attitude, compared to other students, was “unsauber”

¹⁵⁸ Münkler, “Herrschaftspraxis,” 96.

¹⁵⁹ *Protokoll von der Fachgruppenbesprechung am 28.11.52, Gesichtspunkt für die Auswahl der Schüler*, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/00011

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Zwischenbeurteilung für die Jugendfreundin Annemarie F*, December 13, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004

(impure).¹⁶³ In December 1953, the administration dismissed another student from the school because her “immoral political attitude” was intolerable. The file further noted that she had no understanding of workers’ issues and had no capacity for self-criticism.¹⁶⁴

The need for students to remain loyal to the party persisted throughout their entire time of enrollment. For example, the Weimar school dismissed one student, Ingo H, on July 2, 1954 because he had briefly visited West Berlin. As a member of the Free German Youth (FDJ) organization attached to the school, he was forbidden to do so. Both the school administration and the FDJ assembly concluded that this action was the expression of a weak class-consciousness and that he was not well connected to the working class.¹⁶⁵ The minutes of the various meeting held by the FDJ and the school administration discussing Ingo H’s dismissal read like an official party denunciation. The minutes from a June 14 FDJ assembly was filled with many criticisms and attacks that went beyond the actual infraction. One student declared that Ingo H was a bad secretary for the FDJ and that his work was unpunctual.¹⁶⁶ Another noted that he was a quick learner and extremely intelligent. Consequently, his decision to go to West Berlin could not have been a mistake or an act of absent-mindedness, but had to be a premeditated decision.¹⁶⁷ At a meeting held the next day, a student leader condemned Ingo’s actions, declaring, “He studied here at the expense of the worker and farmer state

¹⁶³ Aktennotiz, Manfred O, September 1, 1953, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004.

¹⁶⁴ Aktennotiz, Ursula M, December 5, 1953, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004.

¹⁶⁵ Beschluß, June 16, 1954 from Akten, Ingo H, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004, 78.

¹⁶⁶ Protokoll über die öffentliche Versammlung der FDJ Gruppe am 14.6.54, June 14, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004, 85-88.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

and slapped that state directly in the face with his hostile act.”¹⁶⁸ Another student commented that although Ingo was an intelligent individual with a good knowledge of political theory, he demonstrated a failure to display this knowledge in practice. Instead, his transgression made him an adversary of the youth movement. The accusations soon evolved to include allegations of espionage. Though he was not directly accused of spying for the United States, at least one student suggested it was a possibility and another noted how youth could easily be lured into working as spies by listening to RIAS.¹⁶⁹ All agreed however, that Ingo H’s action was neither innocuous nor innocent, but was in fact a grave infraction against the FDJ, the Radio School of Weimar, and the GDR itself. It was an irresponsible and potentially dangerous act.

In testimony from June 19, 1954, Ingo H noted that, “I did not have any bad intentions; however it was still a great mistake. I have abused the trust of all of the students and all the workers.”¹⁷⁰ When he learned of the recommendation to expel him from the school, he noted regret but also agreed that it was the correct action to take. The school expelled him June 21, after a series of meetings and discussions held by both the school FDJ and the School administration. The personal attacks on his abilities, the assumption that he must have had a subversive motive, and the fact that all of these reflected a weak moral attitude are strikingly similar to an official SED denunciation or purge. Ingo’s contrition also reads like an official confession of guilt for crimes against the Party. Thus, even at a young age, East German radio workers were being

¹⁶⁸ Protokoll über die FDJ Versammlung zum Verhalten des Schülers Ingo H, June 15, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004, 91-93. “Er studiert hier aufkosten des Arbeiter-und Bauernstaates und schlägt diesem Staat direct ins Gesicht durch seine feindliche Handlung.”

¹⁶⁹ Protokoll über die FDJ Versammlung zum Verhalten des Schülers Ingo H, June 15, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004, 91-93.

¹⁷⁰ Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Lehrer-Arbeitsbesprechung am 17.6.1954, 83.

indoctrinated not only in Marxist-Leninist ideology, but also in authoritarian means of repression and control.

Political attitudes were not the only factor that played a role in a student's success however. Many students were dismissed from the school due to the fact that they simply did not exhibit a mastery of writing or speaking German.¹⁷¹ The report cited above from 1952 noted that a great number of students had only a minimal knowledge of the German language.¹⁷² Since the applicants were all German, and were consequently native speakers, we can infer that the problem stemmed from clarity and speaking ability. Another requirement was the ability to argue and defend positions. The schools ruled one student unqualified for journalism and radio work due to the ease with which she conceded arguments and failed to defend her position.¹⁷³ By the time a second class was recruited, the requirements were broadened somewhat to include individuals who already had some experience in radio.¹⁷⁴ However, for the most part, there was little consideration for the technical aspects of radio in the student reviews. The primary prerequisite remained a commitment to defend Marxist-Leninist ideology in news broadcasts.

The various applications to the schools also reveal a good deal about how individuals in the GDR perceived radio. Perhaps the most prominent theme to emerge when one looks through the various letters of application to the Radio Schools in the early 1950s is that they are usually not stamped with ideology of any kind. The impression one gets is that the prospective students were applying to the schools because

¹⁷¹ Abschlussbeurteilung für Erika D, November 18, 1954 and beurteilung für Walter B, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004.

¹⁷² Protokoll von der Fachgruppenbesprechung am 28.11.52.

¹⁷³ Abschlußbeurteilung für Rosa M, November 18, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, F094-01-00/0004.

¹⁷⁴ Münkler, "Produktionssphäre," 55.

it was one of many options before them for a career. Often, it was not the first option. For example, one student from Leipzig admitted in her application letter that the reason she was applying to the Weimar Rundfunkschule was because she had not been admitted to Theater School.¹⁷⁵ Another student frankly admitted that radio was not her first choice for a career, but due to scheduling problems, she could not attend a University. Thus, Fachschule was her backup plan.¹⁷⁶ A father of another applicant praised his daughter for her success as a speaker for various Mass Organizations at her school and stressed his own working class credentials. Yet, even he noted that his daughter was applying because her application to medical school had been short-listed.¹⁷⁷ Others frankly admitted that they sought admission to the school to better their employment opportunities in other fields. These included a mechanic and a secretary.¹⁷⁸ The frankness with which the applicants expressed their indifference to broadcasting in their letters of application is striking.

There were certainly those who expressed excitement and an eagerness to work in radio. One prospective student expressed his specific wish to become a Reporter-Editor for “Democratic Radio.”¹⁷⁹ Another application letter opened with a very grave tone, noting that the subject of this letter and the chance to work for the radio of East Germany was of tremendous importance to the writer’s future.¹⁸⁰ However, the overall trend is a

¹⁷⁵ Bewerbung, Giesala B, July 14, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, Bewerbung für die Rundfunkschule Weimar A-K F094-01-00/0002

¹⁷⁶ Bewerbung, Ingeborg B, September 1, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, Bewerbung für die Rundfunkschule Weimar A-K F094-01-00/0002.

¹⁷⁷ Bewerbung, Regine J, August 21, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, Bewerbung für die Rundfunkschule Weimar A-K F094-01-00/0002.

¹⁷⁸ Bewerbung, Horst B, June 8, 1954, Charlotte H, April 27, 1955, DRA Potsdam, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, Bewerbung für die Rundfunkschule Weimar A-K F094-01-00/0002.

¹⁷⁹ Bewerbung, Jürgen B, September 8, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Bestand Schriftgut, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, Bewerbung für die Rundfunkschule Weimar A-K F094-01-00/0002.

¹⁸⁰ Bewerbung, Klaus K, October 2, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Bestand Schriftgut, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, Bewerbung für die Rundfunkschule Weimar A-K F094-01-00/0002.

frank admission that radio was just another career path to be taken if one wished to go to Fachschule. The tone was not that of eager agitators seeking to help build socialism. Granted, the purpose of the schools was to make these somewhat lukewarm students into dedicated propagandists able to disseminate Marxist-ideology to the German people. Yet, for most students, their concern was simply to find an agreeable career path.

The actual syllabi and examinations reveal a number of important elements about what the SED hoped to see in their journalists. Although Marxist-Leninist ideology was certainly the overarching leitmotif of all plans of instruction, it was a very specific type that stressed both class conflict and the conflict between the Soviet bloc and the Western world. A student in the 1954-55 class of the Weimar Radio School would have attended lessons such as, “Class and the Class Struggle,” “National and Colonial Questions,” “Strategies and Tactics for the Proletarian Parties,” and “Imperialism and the General Crisis of Capitalism.”¹⁸¹ They would have also attended lectures on the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the history of Germany. The lesson plans for the history of Germany predictably conformed to a Marxist Interpretation, with the first course focusing on the Peasants War and the Reformation followed by lectures on the French Revolution and Wars of Liberation which were in turn followed by nine lectures tracing the history of the German Communist movement from Marx to Thälmann. These were followed by lectures on the antifascist struggle in Germany from 1933 to 1945, the liberation by the Red Army, and finally, the New Course.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Lehrpläne: Gesellschaftswissenschaft [1954], DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, Fachschule fuer Rundfunkwesen Rundfunkschule Weimar, F094-01-00/0005, 2-3.

¹⁸² Ibid., 6-7.

Even lectures on journalistic development were developed by teachers looking through an ideological lens, with lecture titles such as “Radio as Collective Agitator and the Main Features of Bolshevik Agitation,” “The Education of Socialist Ethics,” and “Press and Radio as Political Institutions in the Capitalist and Socialist Social Order: The Foundation of True Freedom of the Press and Radio.”¹⁸³ Practical exercises ranged from writing manuscripts to practicing debating skills. The latter exercise called for students to address issues such as “recognizing and formulating problems,” and “the thought process of listeners and how they are influenced and lead by argumentation.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, ideology even guided practical exercises and lessons.

The lessons strongly reflected contemporary concerns. A 1952 lecture from the Grünau Radio School was clearly based on the master narratives developed by German Communists during the 1930s and 1940s. Entitled, “The Resurgence of German Imperialism,” the lecture began with “the total failure” of 1945. The lesson began by drawing broad distinctions between East and West Germany. In East Germany, the economic resources of German imperialists were liquidated. In West Germany, there was a brief period in which war criminals were put on trial, but the western powers had mistakenly left the foundations of “monopolist capital” untouched. German imperialism was now in alliance with United States imperialism. The Federal Republic of Germany was an occupied state whose economy was now dependent on American capital.¹⁸⁵ German Imperialism had reemerged in a number of stages. The syllabus connected all of these stages to US policies. The Marshall Plan, Schuman Plan, and the drive to include

¹⁸³ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹⁸⁵ Seminar Plan zur Lektion, *Das Wiedererstehen des deutschen Imperialismus*, [1952], DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen, Geschäftsunterlagen Büro des Komiteevorsitzenden Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen Rundfunkschule Grünau, F 094-01-00/0029, 49-50.

West Germany in NATO were all part of a US effort to remilitarize Germany and rebuild the German armaments industry as a means of helping corporate and banking leaders.¹⁸⁶ The proposal to include West Germany in the European Defense Community and NATO was a means of uniting Western Europe under American leadership in order to wage war against the Soviet Union, the Peoples' Democracies, and the GDR. Drawing on a political tradition dating back to 1918, the lesson also condemned the Social Democrats as supporters for German Imperialists. In language reflecting the anti-cosmopolitan purges then taking place, the lecture contended "The working class and their party stand at the peak of the national struggle for liberation. The Imperialists cannot gloss over their policies with nationalist phrases, but instead must avail themselves to cosmopolitanism."¹⁸⁷ The lecture closed with a section entitled "Our Tasks" (Unsere Aufgabe). Hence, this was not a lesson for contemplation but a call to arms. The goals included strengthening the West German working class, weakening the right-wing leadership of the SPD, building socialism by fulfilling the Five Year Plan, and confronting the ideology of imperialism. The lecture closed with, "American Imperialism is the common enemy of the working classes of all European countries; the outcome of this is the international solidarity of the working class."¹⁸⁸

A cursory look through the library holdings of the Grünau school demonstrates the focus of the SED's efforts. According to a summary produced by the Grünau school's library, there was just one work, specifically and solely about radio, *Der demokratische Rundfunk in Kampf für eine realistische Kunst* by Wilhelm Girnus. Along with Girnus' volume were two books on press and propaganda and 18 on agitation and

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 50

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 53.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 53.

the press. Compared to this, there were 120 books on Marxism-Leninism.¹⁸⁹ The majority of works were volumes by Marx and Lenin. These included *Das Kapital*, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, *Lohn, Preis und Profit*, *Lohnarbeit und Kapital*, and the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*. Overall, the library held 20 volumes by Marx. There were 34 volumes by Lenin, including *Der Imperialismus als höchstes Stadium des Kapitalismus*, *Staat und Revolution*, *Über den Staat*, and *Was tun?*. These works were all standard and critical works that formed the foundations of Marxist-Leninist ideology. However, volumes by Marx and Lenin were both outnumbered by Stalin. In 1952, a year before his death and four years before Khrushchev's Secret Speech before the 20th Party Congress, Stalin remained at the pinnacle of the world Communist movement. He was represented by 46 volumes in the library at Grünau, a testament to the influence he continued to hold over the early GDR's political culture. The books included *Fragen des Leninismus*, *Der Marxismus und die Nation*, and *Partei und Arbeiterklasse*. Indeed, of the 34 volumes by Lenin at the library, five were co-authored by Stalin.¹⁹⁰

The Radio Schools at Weimar and Grünau did not last long. The last class graduated in 1952 and responsibility for journalist education was transferred to the Karl Marx Universität. The schools simply failed to adequately provide the necessary professional training needed to work in the medium of broadcasting.¹⁹¹ The majority of its graduates never went on to pursue lengthy careers in broadcasting. Despite this, however, the radio school's curriculum provides a good view into the type of reporters

¹⁸⁹ Systematischer Katalog der bibliothek der Rundfunkschule Grünau, DRA Potsdam Historisches Archiv Bestand Schriftgut, F 094-01-00/0045.

¹⁹⁰ Fachschule für Rundfunkwesen Rundfunkschule Grünau, Buchverzeichnisse, Bibliothek 1950-1952, DRA Potsdam Historisches Archiv Bestand Schriftgut, F 094-01-00/0045.

¹⁹¹ Munkel, "Produktionssphäre," 77

the GDR sought for its radio stations. Grounded in Marxist-Leninist ideology, they were expected to be able to argue the central arguments of communism in order to defend the true, democratic Germany from the threat of “anglo-american” imperialism. The radio school curriculums and student makeup thus reveal, in the broadest sense, the SED’s ideal type of radio journalist

By 1960, the SED and StRK had developed a clear set of principles and doctrines that defined how news should be treated and reported over radio. These are summarized in a set of guidelines entitled, *Die Nachricht und Nachrichtengebung im Rundfunk*, (*News and News Guidelines*).¹⁹² The guidelines declared that the main tasks of GDR broadcasters was to achieve peace, strengthen the German Democratic Republic, and lay the groundwork for German reunification.¹⁹³ For a GDR radio journalist, *Die Nachricht und Nachrichtengebung im Rundfunk* provided answers to questions such as “What is News?” and “What is Information?” It also defined terms such as “objectivity” and “sources,” and provided detailed suggestions on the use of jargon, tone, and presentation.

“News,” the guidebook stated, was traditionally defined as, “a certain genre of journalism whose core is information.”¹⁹⁴ Information could be defined as a, “form of human understanding through the intercession of new knowledge.”¹⁹⁵ However, the guidelines noted, traditional definitions failed to account for the how class interests

¹⁹² Einschreiben Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz an den Herrn Bundesminister für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen, April 1960, Bundesarchiv (Barch) Koblenz, B 137/16258.

¹⁹³ *Die Nachricht und Nachrichtengebung im Rundfunk*, Attachment to Einschreiben Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz an den Herrn Bundesminister für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen, April 1960, Bundesarchiv (Barch) Koblenz, B 137/16258, 0023. [1960] “Die Hauptaufgabe des Deutschen Demokratischen Rundfunks ist der Kampf um die Erhaltung des Friedens, um die friedliche Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands auf dem Wege der Konföderation und um die Stärkung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, der Basis des Kampfes um Frieden und Einheit.”

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 0024. “...die Nachricht ist ein bestimmtes journalistisches Genre, deren Kern die Information ist.”

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 0024, “Nach dem allgemeinen Sprachgebrauch könnte man den Begriff Information als Form der menschlichen Verständigung durch Vermittlung neuer Kenntnisse definieren.” (Underlining here and in subsequent citations from this document is in the original unless otherwise noted).

helped to define and shape news.¹⁹⁶ Information and news was not just an end unto itself. Individuals and parties, themselves shaped by class interests, could use news to either help develop a socialist consciousness or manipulate it to serve reactionary political interests. Thus, the guidelines insisted that journalists needed to use news to promote understanding of class politics. In this regard, information in a socialist press was distinct from traditions of “bourgeois” journalism. According to the guidelines, the latter was grounded in an “ostensible” objectivity that masked true class position and interests.¹⁹⁷ Thus, whereas bourgeois journalism concealed the truth behind the mask of objectivity, socialist journalism acknowledged the presence of class interests.¹⁹⁸ Since news could not be detached from these class interests, the distinction between objective and subjective news was a false and illusory one. The guidelines author noted that, “The disposition to ‘objectivity’ is nothing other than a disposition to petit-bourgeois neutrality and is finally a partisan stance of the adversary.”¹⁹⁹ Socialist journalism acknowledged the interests, and thus aimed to use information and news as a means towards a socialist end without masking it beneath the veil of so-called objective reporting.

The guidelines devoted considerable space to analyzing the specific requirements and challenges of broadcast news. These notes balanced theoretical issues with more practical concerns about day-to-day operations and presentation. As the guidelines indicated, GDR stations acquired news from a variety of sources, such as onsite reporters, newspapers, other radio stations, and news services. Agents from all over Germany and in foreign states called in news stories. Agreements were set up between the radio

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 0024, “Aber diese Definition reicht nicht aus, weil sie nichts aussagt über den Wahrheitsgehalt, die Klassenbezogenheit, das Ziel und die Entwicklung der Information sowie ihren Inhalt und ihre Formen.”

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 0029.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 0037, “Der Hang zum ‘Objektivismus’ ist nicht anderes als ein Hang zur kleinbürgerlichen Neutralität und bedeutet letztlich eine Parteinahme für den Gegner.”

stations of the GDR and friendly stations in other countries. The meetings of the GDR parliament and press conferences were broadcast and interviews were held with important personalities on critical questions. State ministries provided the station with information on meetings and policies. These particular sources were not unlike the sources used by RIAS and similar stations in West Germany and West Berlin. However, at the GDR stations the information had to be reviewed and arranged by the news editor for broadcast before it could be broadcast.²⁰⁰

Thus, editors were critical participants in news broadcasts. In the words of the radio guidelines, “The news editor has a high political responsibility.”²⁰¹ Critically, the news editor was responsible for “observing the maneuvers of the enemy” in order to determine the appropriate course of counter-attack.²⁰² Thus, even before news was edited or broadcast, a decision of what to broadcast was informed by what the western press and radio was printing and broadcasting. The GDR considered the position of broadcast editor as “an advanced post” for observing the movements of the enemy. Thus, the duty of news editing was cast in militaristic, adversarial language. News editors needed to be “vigilant,” especially with regards to enemy source material. According to the guidelines, “Here nothing can be assumed, and everything must be tested and selected from the standpoint of class.”²⁰³ The guidelines described sources as “raw material” with which the editors could form and shape news broadcasts. The news editor’s primary task

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 0047-0049.

²⁰¹ “Nachricht und Nachrichtengebung,” 49, “Der Nachrichtenredakteur hat eine hohe politische Verantwortung.”

²⁰² Ibid., 49. “Eine Besonderheit seiner Arbeit liegt darin, daß er auf “vorgeschobenen Posten” ständig die Bewegungen und die Manöver des Feindes beobachten, sie signalisieren und zum wohlüberlegten Gegenanriff übergehen muß.”

²⁰³ Ibid., 0050. “Hier kann nichts übernommen, sondern es muß alles vom Klassenstandpunkt geprüft und ausgewählt werden.”

was to act as a mediator between sources and the listeners and to wage an aggressive media campaign against western broadcasters.

The guidelines provided specific rules concerning what type of language to use as well. In line with Lenin's original precepts, the pamphlet argued that language needed to be, "clear and succinct" without "superfluous words and bloated phrases."²⁰⁴ According to the pamphlet, an unfortunate inheritance from the Nazi era was an over-reliance on bureaucratic jargon and on the passive voice. Reporters were discouraged from using either in their broadcasting. The over-reliance on the passive voice also led broadcasts to sound tedious. This was caused by overly complex sentences with superfluous elements, such as "to the area of culture," and "in the direction of socialist education."²⁰⁵ The pamphlet noted that "in culture" and "for socialist education" were better and more exact ways of phrasing these statements. The statements also did not sound so "inflated."²⁰⁶ In the words of the pamphlet, the News Editor needed to be a "master of language," able to simplify and clarify statements broadcast by the various GDR stations. Language needed to be simple and understandable and draw from both the style of classic literature and from the standard works of Marxism-Leninism.²⁰⁷ Thus, teaching goals that had shaped the curriculum of the Weimar and Grünau Radio Schools remained influential seven years later. The news editor was not only responsible for using language well and clearly. He was also responsible for developing a new national language based on

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 0052. "Lenin forderte von den Agitatoren und Propagandisten eine klare und knappe Sprache ohne überflüssige Worte und aufgeblähte Phrasen."

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 53. "Aus dem politischen Jargon stammen solche Redewendungen wie 'auf dem Sektor der tierischen Produktion,' 'auf dem Gebiet der Kultur,' 'auf der Linie der Gewerkschaft,' 'in Richtung der sozialistischen Erziehung' usw."

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 53. "Sagen wir einfach 'in der tierischen Erzeugung,' 'in der Kultur,' 'mit Hilfe der Gewerkschaft', 'für die sozialistische Erziehung,' so sagen wir genau dasselbe, und es klingt nicht so geschraubt."

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 61.

socialist content.²⁰⁸ Language and words were transitory and, like information itself, raw material to be shaped and melded towards fulfilling a specific goal.

The guidelines even presented suggestions for how to open and close reports. According to the pamphlet, the first sentence needed to immediately address a specific piece of information that was new and interesting for the listener. Broad generalities only weakened the quality of the news broadcast. The broadcast then needed to address the traditional five ws (what, where, who, when, how) and in doing so, avoid direct citation. “A literal citation at the start of a broadcast in general addles the listener and is therefore to be avoided.”²⁰⁹ Like RIAS reporters, East German reporters were instructed to avoid literal quotation, though for different reasons. The pamphlet even specified sentence structure, indicating where subjects and predicates should be ordered in a particular phrase.

By the mid-1950s, the institutional organization of the GDR’s media organs had largely been set. They would remain relatively unchanged until 1989. The ADN served as the media’s principle wire service. The StRK and SED’s Department for Agitation and Propaganda were the dominant influence on broadcasting operations. Furthermore, the media was strongly defined by the official, party sanctioned interpretation of Marxism-Leninism. Although at a number of points journalists would attempt to create a system of broadcasting that was less overtly stamped by the SED’s ideology, these attempts were relatively minor and had little lasting impact. The SED continued to instruct reporters to treat the reporting of news as a means to an end. Reporting was

²⁰⁸ Ibid., “Er muß mithelfen, die Sprache durch den neuen sozialistischen Inhalt zu vervollständigen und zu bereichern.”

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 63. “Ein wörtliche Zitat am Anfang einer Meldung verwirrt in der Regel den Hörer und ist daher meistens abzulehnen.”

designed to agitate the masses and educate them in the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. The SED derided so-called objective journalism as a bourgeois construct designed to mask class interests. Consequently, the interests and goals of the SED defined GDR stations and broadcast journalism throughout the state's existence.

Conclusion

Throughout the 1950s, RIAS, SFB, and radio stations in the GDR developed different approaches to journalism. RIAS developed a model that balanced accuracy with engagement. On the one hand, RIAS focused on presenting news that was accurate and verifiable. The station drew upon multiple wire services, newspapers, and radio stations for news stories and information. Sources were cited and properly attributed in broadcasts and reporters drew a clear distinction between factual and editorial content. Consequently, RIAS's pursuit of objective news was as much about style of presentation as it was about accurate information. Stories needed to *sound* objective and impartial. However, while RIAS made efforts to be objective and accurate, it did not see itself as neutral. The station made concerted efforts to forge a bond with East German listeners, break them out of isolation and encourage them to oppose the policies of the German Democratic Republic. It produced programming designed specifically for East German listeners that challenged the SED's media monopoly.

The creation of Sender Freies Berlin (SFB) also presented new challenges and means for pursuing journalism in divided Berlin. As an independent, public broadcaster funded by the West Berlin municipal government, SFB pursued a similar line of

programming to RIAS. It produced shows for East Germany and pursued a firm, anti-communist line in its broadcasts. However, as a public broadcaster, the station did not focus entirely on a specific group or demographic. As a result, many critics complained that SFB was not sufficiently anti-communist. SFB's response to these criticisms touched on the necessity and effectiveness of avoiding news broadcasts dominated by ideology.

As a result of the widespread purges that afflicted not only radio but all of the GDR during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the stations in the GDR underwent a process of de-professionalization and centralization that resulted in the dismissal of most experienced radio journalists and the dissolution of local stations through east Germany. News reporting, already strongly guided by communist ideology, was now thoroughly grounded in it. Radio journalism schools placed greater stress on learning the works of Lenin, Marx, and Stalin than in the practical tasks of reporting and broadcasting. The atmosphere at these schools was like a miniature SED, with the threat of public denunciation and dismissal apparent for infractions against school rules. Once out of school and attached to a radio station, GDR journalists were schooled in specific techniques of broadcasting and presenting news. News Editors were given the task of not only choosing what news to broadcast, but also insuring that news broadcasts helped to develop a socialist class-consciousness amongst the citizens of the GDR. At the same time, editors were expected to pay close attention to the broadcasts coming from enemy radio stations in order to develop effective means of combating them and refuting their assertions. As always, radio in East Germany was linked to broadcasting coming from West Berlin and West Germany.

Chapter Four: Berlin's Radio Stations and the June 1953 Uprising in East Germany

Among the many programs produced to celebrate RIAS's sixtieth anniversary by its successor Deutschland Radio was an interview with RIAS reporter Egon Bahr. The interview focused on RIAS's involvement in the June 17, 1953 uprising against the East German state. That uprising, the first of its kind in any communist state, shook the GDR to its foundations and had consequences affecting not only East Germany but the Soviet Union as well. In the course of the interview, Bahr reiterated a contention he had made both in his memoirs and in several articles written about the uprising. The presence of protest banners emblazoned with slogans using the same language as RIAS broadcasts indicated that the station's influence had had far reaching consequences. As Bahr declared, "That meant that RIAS was, without knowing it and without intending it, the catalyst of the uprising."¹

RIAS's participation in the events of June 17, 1953 in East Berlin has occupied a considerable amount of interest amongst scholars of both the station and the uprising. Most of this work has engaged the question of whether or not RIAS provoked the uprising and to what extent it helped to spread it throughout the GDR.² Although the

¹ Interview with Egon Bahr by Nana Brink, January 9, 2006, Deutschlandradio Kultur, available at <http://www.dradio.de/dkultur/sendungen/kulturinterview/456023/>. Accessed May 17, 2006. "Es Heisst, der RIAS war - ohne es zu wissen und ohne es zu wollen - zum Katalysator des Aufstandes geworden." See as well Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, Egon Bahr, "Ein Datum mit Langzeitwirkung," *Die Welt*, June 17, 2003, Egon Bahr, "Wollen Sie den Dritten Weltkrieg?," *Handesblatt*, June 11, 2003, and Egon Bahr, "Bewegung ging von Ostdeutschland aus," *Berliner Zeitung*, June 16, 1953.

² No scholar argues, as the SED did, that RIAS deliberately provoked the uprising. However, many studies of the events of the uprising agree that without RIAS's broadcasts the uprising would not have occurred, or would have transpired in a very different manner. See, for example Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Germany: June 17, 1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Volksaufstand und Herbstrevolution: Die Rolle der West-Medien 1953 und 1989 im Vergleich," in *Aufstände im Ostblock: Zur Krisengeschichte des realen Sozialismus* ed. Henrik Bispink, Danyel, Jürgen, Hertle, Hans-Hermann (Berlin: C.H. Links Verlag, 2004), 163-192, Markus Wackett, "Wir sprechen zur Zone," Ostermann, "Die Beste Chance für ein Rollback?," Bernd Stöver, "Radio mit

station did not openly incite the uprising, it nevertheless played a role in forging an atmosphere of protest and dissatisfaction in the months before June 1953. During the protests themselves, its reports helped transform a general strike in East Berlin into a nation-wide uprising. Furthermore, RIAS played a critical role in analyzing and explaining the uprising to listeners as the events unfolded. Individuals on both sides of the Iron Curtain strongly believed the station's broadcasts were decisive in encouraging East Germans to stage protests against the SED. However, the SED believed that RIAS had a far greater influence on the events, and believed that the station had in fact helped launch the uprising through the use of coded messages broadcast to agents lurking throughout the GDR.

Few scholars, however, have paid attention to analyzing the language and assertions the station was actually broadcasting during the course of the uprising. An analysis of what RIAS and East German stations broadcast during the days preceding, during, and after the uprising present a number of new questions to consider with regards to the relationship between the mass media and historical circumstances. As events unfolded at a phenomenally rapid rate, RIAS reporters were faced with the task of both analyzing and explaining events to their listeners, often as they were occurring. Thus, radio reporters were afforded the chance to shape political culture at the very moment events were taking place. As they did this, they helped construct an explanatory narrative of the June 17 uprising. The initial impetus for the uprising, the reduction of work quotas and reforms within the GDR itself, were downplayed in favor of stressing radical democratic reforms and national reunification. Thus, as the events unfolded, RIAS was

kalkuliertem Risiko," in *Zwischen Pop und Propaganda: Radio in der DDR*, ed. Klaus Arnold and Christoph Classen (Berlin: C.H. Links Verlag, 2004), 209-228, Hixon, *Parting the Curtain*, 74 and Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 12-48.

already laying the groundwork that would transform a workers' uprising into a dramatic plea for national unification.

East German radio also developed explanatory narratives with which it presented and analyzed the uprising. Unlike RIAS, East Germany's three radio stations, Berlin I, II, and III, were largely silent during the June uprising. However, within days of the revolt's suppression, the East German stations were pronouncing the uprising the act of fascist agents attempting to launch a coup against the East German state. At the same time, however, reformist elements within East Germany's radio institutions attempted to use the event as a possible means for improving the quality of radio journalism by reducing the heavy influence of Communist ideology on news broadcasts. Although this ultimately did not come to pass, it nevertheless reveals the important influence of the uprising on radio broadcasting in East Germany.

This chapter examines the commentaries broadcast by both RIAS and East German radio during and after the events of the June 17 uprising. Both groups of broadcasters developed narratives used by station reporters to explain and analyze the causes and consequences of the uprising. Radio in both West and East Germany made a concerted effort, even before the events had completely unfolded, to not only report on the uprising, but to also shape how listeners understood the events and define what the June 1953 uprising was actually about.

Background to the Uprising

The East German uprisings were the result of four years of economic and political instability caused by the GDR's attempts to both establish its legitimacy and build a socialist society. Walter Ulbricht's 1949 decision to collectivize the GDR's economy and Stalinize its political system was reaffirmed at the Second Party Conference of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in July 1952. During the conference, Ulbricht declared that the "establishment of socialism" was the primary goal of the SED and East German government. In order to achieve this goal, the SED ordered the economy to be heavily industrialized, a difficult task in light of the fact that most of East Germany's economy was agriculturally based. Furthermore, reparations payments to the Soviets were taxing the GDR's economy. At the same time, exports decreased while workers' wages increased, threatening production levels. To combat this, the SED initially tried to implement collective contracts and then raised work quotas. At the same time the GDR was afflicted by a food shortage as East German farmers fled the state for West Germany, abandoning arable land and consequently reducing agricultural production.³ It should not be forgotten that throughout these difficulties, RIAS's programs like *Werktag der Zone*, *Aus der Zone für die Zone*, and *Berlin spricht zur Zone* were constantly broadcasting news of economic problems and encouraging workers to be recalcitrant with regards to the GDR government's demands.

The SED's domestic troubles were compounded by its uneasy relationship within the Soviet bloc. Joseph Stalin had greeted the creation of the German Democratic Republic with little enthusiasm. The specter of a united, rearmed, and hostile Germany haunted Stalin, and while the GDR obviously posed no threat to the Soviets, a divided Germany increased the likelihood of a rearmed West German state allied to the United

³ Baring, *Uprising in East Germany*, 1-22.

States.⁴ Proposals to integrate West Germany into NATO and plans to create a European Defense Community (EDC) further exacerbated these fears. In March 1952, Stalin made a proposal calling for elections in both Germanys, the reunification of a neutral Germany, and the withdrawal of all allied troops from German territory within the year. The proposal was confronted with skepticism and distrust on the part of the West, who perceived it as diplomatic posturing intended to cast the Western Allies as the primary obstacles to German unification.⁵ However, while it is not certain whether or not Stalin would have gone through with German reunification, what is clear is that the leader of world communism had publicly declared a willingness to sacrifice the German Democratic Republic at the very moment it was trying to establish a society along communist lines.

It was in this atmosphere of uncertainty that Stalin died on March 5, 1953. In the wake of Stalin's death, a mood of anticipation emerged as observers throughout the world waited to see who would take Stalin's place and what changes in policy Stalin's death might bring. The leading candidate to succeed Stalin, NKVD chief Lavrentiy Beria, presented himself as a possible reformer.⁶ With a new presidential administration in Washington using rhetoric that included phrases like "liberation" and "roll back," the new Soviet leader was interested in relaxing tensions with the west.⁷

This meant putting the brakes on Ulbricht's drive towards socialism. In June 1953, Soviet leaders pressured the SED to adopt a New Course that called for a relaxation of industrialization, support for private enterprise, guaranteeing civil rights, and

⁴ See Loth, *Stalin's Ungeliebtes Kind*, Gaddis, *We now Know*, 127, and Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*.

⁵ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 127.

⁶ Stöver, *Der Kalter Krieg*, 117.

⁷ Ostermann, "Die Beste Chance für ein Rollback?" and Stöver, *Der Kalter Krieg*, 118.

strengthening non-SED organizations.⁸ Fractures began to show in the leadership of the SED, as *Neues Deutschland* editor Rudolf Herrnstadt tried to exploit Ulbricht's differences with Moscow to gain support for a leadership change. On June 11, 1953 the SED published its decision to adopt the New Course and abandon the previous policy of building socialism. Yet, in contrast to this apparently new policy of reform, increased work quotas remained even though wages did not change. The divisions in the leadership became public when, on June 14 Herrnstadt's *Neues Deutschland* published a commentary condemning Ulbricht's decision to maintain the present quotas. It seemed, to the public, that a dramatic and perhaps decisive change was about to occur in East Germany.

RIAS and its East German Audience on the Eve of the Uprising

Throughout the early 1950s, RIAS remained the most respected and popular news source for listeners throughout the GDR. A survey from the US State Department produced by the United States Information Service of East German listeners from February 1953 revealed a population that was strongly interested in listening to Western broadcasts, in particular RIAS. Furthermore, it reveals a country in which radio was extremely popular. Roughly eight out of ten East Germans tuned in to Western radio stations.⁹ There was approximately one radio set per every five inhabitants in the GDR.

⁸ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 29, Baring, *Uprising in East Germany*, 28-34, Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 191.

⁹ International Evaluation Staff, (IEV), *Country Report on Radio: East Germany*, February 1953, NARA, RG 306 (USIA), Office of Research, Reports and Related Studies Maintained or Sponsored by the International Evaluation Staff (IEV) and other Offices of the Department of State, 1948-1953, Entry 1007A, 250/67/04/04-250/67/05/03, Box 29.

In Berlin, the number was higher, with one set for every four inhabitants. Radio was also the primary means used by East Germans to maintain contact with the western world.

Thus, for the most part, a family of four or five people would have had access to a radio set in the GDR. Furthermore, this set was the principle way individuals could obtain news of events outside of East Germany. Amongst the numerous radio stations one could hear in the GDR, RIAS was the most popular. Not only did listeners tune into the station, but many corresponded with it as well, thus strengthening the bond between audience and broadcaster. In the first half of 1952, for example, the station received an average of 4,500 letters a month from East Germany.¹⁰ Furthermore, listeners spread information obtained from news broadcasts through word-of-mouth. Over half of those responding during a series of interviews of East German listeners done in 1951 indicated that the contents of western broadcasts were spread by word-of-mouth.¹¹

It is important to note that the USIS's surveys were not representative of the entire East German population. This was especially pertinent regarding listeners' opinion of RIAS. The respondents were refugees and visitors, individuals who were more likely to be critical of the GDR and more politically active. The report's authors themselves freely acknowledged this, but went on to note that according to two other independent studies, all evidence indicated that RIAS was clearly the most popular broadcaster in the GDR. According to the survey, "The most frequently cited reason for listening to Western stations, and particularly to RIAS, is the listeners' need for truthful, factual and variegated news and information about political and economic developments and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

conditions in East and West.”¹² Furthermore, the sudden increase in jamming operations against RIAS indicated that the station was having an impact (at least in the eyes of the SED) on the population of the GDR. Listeners were motivated by RIAS’s status as a source for accurate news. News programming was RIAS’s most popular product, with 42% of respondents indicating that it was their favorite area of programming. In comparison, only 22% indicated music programs as their favorite. To further emphasize the status accorded to RIAS’s news, just 9% indicated that NWDR’s news was their favorite programming.¹³ Critically, however, the survey also acknowledged that many listeners sought out RIAS in order to “obtain psychological reinforcement of their anti-Communist attitudes and opinions.” Thus, the report acknowledged that while RIAS was popular, it was not necessarily altering listeners’ opinions. Individuals often turned to RIAS because they wished to hear their own opinion and attitudes confirmed and discussed. It is also important to note that listeners did not ignore the GDR’s radio stations. As the survey noted, individuals often listened to the news broadcasts of both, in order to compare the broadcasts from both the western and eastern stations.¹⁴ For the most part, however, listeners preferred the music programming of the East German stations to their news programming.

The volume of letters sent from the GDR to RIAS frequently struck the station’s staff members and US officials alike. US and RIAS officials were well aware that letters were not always representative of the population. A report from the Bureau of Social Science Research at American University examining fan letters sent to various US Information Agency programs in November 1953 noted that a politically active and

¹² Ibid., 6.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴ Ibid., 12.

engaged minority usually wrote letters to US stations.¹⁵ Yet, the act of letter writing demonstrated that listeners in East Germany were willing to forge some kind of connection with the American station. A RIAS internal report from May 1955 indicated that RIAS had received 794,550 letters since 1948. On average, the station received about 15,000 letters a month, with about 10-15% of those letters emanating from the GDR. Prior to an increase in East German efforts to intercept letters that began in March 1952, GDR letters amounted to about a third of the total letters received by the station. In the course of the report, the author cited a number of letters considered representative by the station. Comments from these letters (whose authors remained anonymous in the report) included statements such as, “RIAS is like a beloved son of America whom America has sent to Germany to pour consolation and hope into troubled, discouraged hearts,” and “We are always astonished to learn how well informed you are about what goes on here.”¹⁶ One listener, in a letter dated from February 1952, wrote, “RIAS seems to know our most private thoughts, wishes and hopes. Its voice penetrates into the most modest dwellings...RIAS can properly lay claim to being a station for the people.”¹⁷ Another commented that listening to RIAS made them feel less isolated. Writers included housewives, professionals, former political prisoners, a former head of a factory union, craftsmen, students, and pensioners. Thus, letters did not necessarily emanate from one particular class or age group. Letter writers did not only send messages of the thanks to the station. Many used letters to provide the station with information about conditions in East Germany, including the productivity of factories and the biographical

¹⁵ Bureau of Social Science Research, American University, *Fan Mail: Its Use in Evaluating Effectiveness*, NARA, RG 306 (USIA), Special Reports, 1953-1982, Entry 1009A, 1953-1963 250/67/07/04-07, Box 1.

¹⁶ RIAS Listener Mail [1953], Ewing Papers, Box 1, Folder 4: RIAS Organization and Programming Information, Marshall Library.

¹⁷ Ibid.

information about SED officials. Letters of this nature were so numerous that RIAS began producing a program focusing on presenting this information to listeners in 1952.¹⁸

Many among RIAS's audience were not passive listeners. Instead, they were actively engaged, seeing RIAS as a representative of the United States in East Germany. The picture created by RIAS's letter survey and the USIS's listener surveys is of an engaged, interested audience that sought out RIAS's broadcasts as a source for accurate news and information. Many spread this news via word-of-mouth, thus disseminating RIAS news reports even further. At the same time, the survey also showed that listeners did not just listen to RIAS, even if they believed the American station was more accurate. Listeners tuned into multiple stations, including the GDR's own broadcasters, in order to assemble information to make their own judgments. This listening behavior played an important role during the June 17 uprising.

Exploiting Mistakes: RIAS and June 17

The GDR's problems were largely self-inflicted. It was Ulbricht's insistence on creating a hard-line Stalinist state, despite less than favorable political and economic conditions, that caused the material circumstances that were the principle cause of the uprising. Once the New Course was announced, it did not take long for RIAS to seize upon the contradictory messages publicized by the SED and exploit the political divides within the East German government. Beginning on June 11, the day the SED made the New Course public, RIAS made sure the new policies were the focus of the daily news.

¹⁸ "RIAS Scores with East Zone Program," *Information Bulletin: Monthly Magazine of the Office of US High Commissioner for Germany*, February 1952, University of Maryland: Government Documents S 1.85 1952.

The first broadcast was sent at 5:30 am, meaning that many listeners waking up for work would possibly hear the news of the New Course from RIAS before they read or heard it from official SED organs.¹⁹ The presumably unsuspecting listener would have heard the following, startling broadcast: “During yesterday’s evening hours, the SED Politburo has proposed a range of measures to the Soviet Zone government that outline an essential change in policies vis-à-vis the population of the Zone. The grounds for this, according to the SED, were mistakes committed by the SED and the government.”²⁰ Following the remarkable acknowledgment that the Party had made mistakes, the theoretical listener would then hear the news that the SED would be providing ration cards for all of its citizens, providing amnesty for political prisoners, permitting the return of farmers who had fled to West Germany and West Berlin without reprisal and punishment, and making guarantees for private enterprises.²¹ Throughout the day, the station’s news broadcasts pointed out that the SED had not only committed mistakes but was also acknowledging the errors to the public.²² The station continued to broadcast this news over the next two days.²³

What was important about these broadcasts was not that RIAS was reporting the SED had made mistakes, but that RIAS was reporting the SED had *admitted* making mistakes. A RIAS listener who read the official SED organ, *Neues Deutschland* on June

¹⁹ RIAS News Broadcast, 5:30 am, June 11, 1953, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositium, Nachrichten, B 203-00-02/0001.

²⁰ Ibid. “Das SED-Politbüro hat der Sowjetzonenregierung in den gestrigen späten Abendstunden eine Reihe von Massnahmen vorgeschlagen, die eine wesentliche Änderung der bisherig betriebenen Politik gegenüber der Bevölkerung der Zone darstellen. Zur Begründung wird erklärt, bisher seien von seiten der SED und der Regierung Fehler begangen worden.”

²¹ Ibid.

²² RIAS News Broadcast, 6:30 am and 7:30 am, June 11, 1953, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Despoistium Nachrichten, B 203-00-02/0001

²³ RIAS News Broadcast, June 12, 1953, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Despoistium Nachrichten, B 203-00-02/0001 and RIAS News Broadcast, June 13, 1953, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Despoistium Nachrichten, B 203-00-02/0001.

14 would have found RIAS's statements confirmed in an article critical of the measures taken by the Politburo before the New Course.²⁴

Despite the introduction of the New Course, the SED remained firm that it would not reduce the current work quotas. This news bred discontent throughout East Germany, especially amongst the construction workers currently building the Stalinallee. On June 15, during its 7:30 pm newscast, RIAS reported that workers were planning to go on strike:

In East Berlin today, protest strikes erupted at three construction sites of the publicly owned Business Industry Building against the government-mandated work quota increase of ten percent. RIAS has learned that, at the construction site of Friedrichshain Hospital, work will stop at 9 O'clock tomorrow, while the workers at the construction site at Stalinallee, Block 40 and Volkspolizeiinspektion Friedrichshain will take part in the strike at 2 pm and 3 pm. The protest resolution to the Zonal Government will demand the reduction of the raised work quotas.²⁵

The same broadcast was repeated at 10 pm and at midnight and similar broadcasts were made throughout the morning.²⁶ Thus, even before June 16 began, RIAS listeners throughout East Germany were aware that a work stoppage was planned in East Berlin for that day. At 4:30 pm on June 16, 1953, RIAS became the first German language

²⁴ Baring, *Uprising in East Germany*, 32-33.

²⁵ Eberhard Schütz, Egon Bahr, Klaus Böllung, Nachrichten Abteilung, *Nachrichten-Berichterstattung über Zonenaufstand*, June 23, 1953, RIAS Depositum, F 404-00-00/0002. "In Ostberlin kam es heute auf drei Baustellen des volkseigenen Betriebes Industriebau zu Proteststreiks gegen die von der Regierung angeordnete Normenerhöhung um zehn Prozent. Auf der Baustelle Krankenhaus Friedrichshain wurde—wie RIAS erfährt—um neun Uhr die Arbeit niedergelegt, während die Arbeiter auf den Baustellen Stalinallee Block 40 und Volkspolizeiinspektion Friedrichshain ab 14 und 15 Uhr in den Ausstand traten. In Protestresolutionen an die Zonenregierung wurde die Zurückziehung der Anordnung über die Erhöhung der Normen gefordert."

²⁶ *Ibid.*

station to report specific details about the work stoppages.²⁷ The report announced: “Today, in the Soviet Sector of Berlin, large mass demonstrations of workers have erupted before the buildings of the Zonal Government protesting against raising work quotas, against conditions in the Soviet occupied part of Germany, and against government policies.”²⁸ The RIAS report was straightforward and factual. However, it nevertheless revealed that the strikers’ concerns were moving beyond just labor issues. The reporter then revealed the demands of the protesters, quoting their slogans: “Soon, the square before the government building was filled with a dense crowd, which called in loud chants, ‘We demand higher wages and lower prices, we ask for the elimination of the quotas, away with the government, we want free elections.’”²⁹ The reporter then noted that when GDR Ministers Heinrich Rau and Fritz Seldmann appeared before the building window, the crowd demanded, with ever increasing volume, “ ‘Ulbricht or Grotewohl.’ ” When Selbmann attempted to speak to the strikers, the crowd declared: “ ‘We are not just against the quotas in the Stalinallee, we are against the quotas in all of Germany. We want free elections. We are all of Berlin.’ ”³⁰ The report also noted that policemen responsible for protecting the building did not intervene to stop the demonstration.³¹

The RIAS broadcasts did not radicalize the protests. The demonstrators themselves did this, as the strikers’ demands quickly moved beyond labor issues and became a call for fundamental political change. However, subsequent RIAS broadcasts,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., Im Sowjetsektor Berlins ist es heute zu grossen Massendemonstrationen der Arbeiter gekommen, die vor dem Gebäude der Zonenregierung gegen die Normenerhöhung, die Zustände im sowjetisch besetzten Gebiet Deutschlands und die Politik der Regierung selbst protestieren.

²⁹ Ibid. “Der Platz vor dem Regierungsgebäude war bald mit einer dichten Menschenmenge gefüllt, die in lauten Sprechchören ‘Wir fordern höhere Löhne und niedrigere Preise, wir verlangen die Beseitigung der Normen, Weg mit der Regierung, Wir wollen freie Wahlen’ rief.”

³⁰ Ibid.,

³¹ Ibid.

marked by vivid and detailed descriptions of the events transpiring across East Berlin, focused on this fundamental transformation. The image created by the 4:30pm broadcast is of an extremely forceful crowd capable of intimidating the East German government and bending it to their will. Before listeners' ears, the June 16 work stoppage was quickly transforming into a general uprising against the political system of the German Democratic Republic itself.

Initially, western news services and the US High Commission found RIAS's 4:30 report dubious. RIAS's political chief, Gordon Ewing, recalled, "They thought we'd gone off the deep end, at first."³² However, Ewing and his staff were aware that something unprecedented was occurring in East Germany. Reporters from other newspapers also began to confirm the RIAS broadcasts. The scene at RIAS was one of excitement and anticipation. The corridors before the political office were filled with people, many of them East Berliners talking with RIAS editors and providing them with information.³³ At 3:00 that afternoon, three delegates from the strike arrived at the station and met with Egon Bahr and fellow editor Mathias Walden, requesting to go on the air.³⁴

The request forced RIAS to develop guidelines for reporting the uprising. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, RIAS was fairly autonomous. Its German and American staff made its programming decisions, not the State Department or HICOG. However, there were concerns about the immensity of the event transpiring. It was not just the East German government that was threatened with collapse, but a satellite of the

³² Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 44.

³³ Ibid., 44.

³⁴ Mathias Walden, "Der 16. und 17. Juni im RIAS." Undated personal account written by Walden on the events of the uprising and RIAS's involvement in them. DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut Bestand des SFB 316.

Soviet Union and an area of Soviet responsibility. Furthermore, RIAS was not just a radio station, but the voice of the United States in East Germany. Anything it broadcast would be interpreted with that fact in mind. Indeed, one delegate even believed that RIAS's broadcasts of support for the strikes would be followed by Western Allied invasion.³⁵ To complicate matters, the chief American official in West Germany, High Commissioner James Conant, as well as HICOG's Public Affairs Director Alfred Boerner were in Washington DC at the time.³⁶ West Berlin's mayor, Ernst Reuter, was also out of the city. Waiting for responses from Washington DC to each and every programming question was not a realistic option. Thus, as Ewing put it, "We were on the air...in the end only we could decide, we were on the spot."³⁷ The station directors opted for a line that was described by one HICOG official as "sympathetic reporting."³⁸ The station could not lend itself as a voice to the strikers. However, it could report the events thoroughly and factually. A wire exchange between HICOG's Berlin office and US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles confirmed this course of action.³⁹ Ewing then directed Program Director Eberhard Schütz to prepare for special programming focusing on the events in East Berlin for the foreseeable future.⁴⁰ That night, at 7:45 pm, Eberhard Schütz delivered the first editorial commentary on the events.

Schütz's commentary, though aimed at presenting a "sympathetic" viewpoint, nevertheless presented a strong and vigorous endorsement of both the protesters and the official requests of the workers' delegation. It presents a clear illustration of the often-

³⁵ Christian F. Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953: The Cold War, The German Question, and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain*, (New York: Central European University Press, 2001), 173.

³⁶ Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 47.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, 173.

⁴⁰ Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 43.

tenuous balance RIAS tried to achieve between objective reporting and engaging the East German government and openly supporting its population. While Schütz sought to provide an analysis of the Uprising, he also clearly expressed sympathy for the action and hopes for its success. The fact that it was broadcast at 7:45 in the evening was also critical. As the State Department's February 1953 survey indicated, the period between 7:00 pm and 10:00 pm were the most popular hours for listening to radio for East Germans.⁴¹

Schütz opened by describing the unprecedented nature of the events:

When, days ago, we heard of workers' demonstrations in Pilsen, many of us were disposed to treat this news with attentive reservation and describe it as 'incredible.' Incredible, not because people in the west doubted the will to resist of those behind the Iron Curtain, but because, in light of the predatory terror in the peoples' democracies with which we have grown accustomed, resistance against the Bolshevik regime was evidence of either irresponsible carelessness, the expression of hopeless desperation, or the hallmark of a martyr's bravery.⁴²

Schütz declared that the current demonstrations were neither irresponsible nor suicidal.

The protests aimed to achieve legitimate democratic goals and, importantly, it was

⁴¹ *Country Report on Radio: East Germany*, February 1953, NARA, RG 306 (USIA), 1.

⁴² Eberhard Schütz Kommentar, June 16, 1953, Ewing Papers, Box 1, Folder 8: RIAS Special Reports, Marshall Library. For an audio version of the commentary, see the following website: "17. Juni 1953—Homepage Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, DeutschlandRadio, Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam," <http://www.17juni53.de/material/otoene.html> "Als wir vor Tagen von Demonstrationen der Arbeiterschaft von Pilsen hoerten, waren viele von uns geneigt, diese Nachricht mit vorsichtiger Zureuckhaltung aufzunehmen, sie als 'unglaublich' zu bezeichnen. Unglaublich nicht etwa, weil man im Westen an dem Widerstandswillen der Menschen hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang zweifelt, sondern weil wir uns angesichts des rücksichtslosen Terrors in den Volksdemokratien schon an die Vorstellung gewöhnt haben, offener Widerstand gegen das bolschewistische Regime beweise entweder unverantwortlichen Leichtsinn, sei Ausdruck hoffnungsloser Verzweiflung oder Zeichen eines zum Märtyrertum bereiten Mutes."

reasonable to believe these goals were achievable. Thus the overall aim of the commentary was to help transform a general strike against work quotas into a revolt against the GDR that focused on achieving major political reforms. Schütz's central assertion was that the events in East Berlin were an unprecedented declaration for fundamental democratic rights for all Germans living in East Germany.

Even before the protests erupted into a general uprising on June 17, Schütz declared the actions in East Berlin a victory for democracy and the people of East Germany. "It is this victory which our East Berliners share with the entire working population of the Soviet Zone."⁴³ He went on to declare that the protests had forced the GDR leadership to back down.⁴⁴ Drawing continuities between the twelve years of the Third Reich with seven years of the GDR, Schütz praised the demonstrators' political intuition: "In seven years of accumulating corruption of Union principles—and this after thirteen years (sic) of the national socialist working front—more than a thousand East Berliner working men have demonstrated admirable political instinct. And these are the construction workers of the Stalinallee, who have been heavily praised by the SED regime."⁴⁵ Schütz then noted how the events in East Berlin were moving from a strike into a political revolt. The demands for free elections, the removal of the "Pankow Regime" and the freedoms shared by West Germans went beyond labor gains and entered the realm of true political achievement.⁴⁶ As Schütz declared, "[The protesters] demand

⁴³ Ibid., "Es ist dies ein Sieg, den unserer Ostberliner mit der gesamten arbeitenden Bevoelkerung der Sowjetzone teilen."

⁴⁴ Ibid., "Sie haben, verehrte Hoererinnen und Hoerer, die sowjetdeutschen Machthaber gezwungen, ihre Ziele zurueckzustecken."

⁴⁵ Ibid., "In sieben Jahren zunehmener Verfaelschung des gewerkschaftlichen Gedankens—und dies nach dreizehn Jahren nationalsozialistischer Arbeitsfront—haben meherer Tausend Ostberliner arbeitende Menschen, allen voran die vom SED-Regime vielgeruehmten Bauarbeiter der Stalinallee, einen bewundernswerten politischen Instinkt bewiesen."

⁴⁶ Ibid.

free elections, they demand the resignation of the Pankow Regime, and they demand the freedoms, which have been granted to us in West Berlin and the Federal Republic.”⁴⁷

When Schütz came to discuss the workers delegation which had visited RIAS that afternoon, he noted the delegates wished to broadcast their demands on the radio station in order to help spread the movement. Here, Schütz was on shaky ground. RIAS, as Ewing noted, could not become the mouthpiece for the striking workers. Yet, Schütz bypassed this problem by simply reporting about the delegates’ demands. In doing so, he declared that RIAS was under a moral obligation to present news of the demands. “We would be quixotic and not worthy of our listeners’ trust, if we did not award entitlement to such a demand. We simply want to say this: What the population of East Berlin and the Soviet Zone want today and what it considers achievable with the means at its disposal, is nothing more and nothing less than the end of totalitarian rule in the Kremlin’s German satellite.”⁴⁸

Schütz proceeded to remind his listeners of the SED’s mistakes. “When a Matern or a Dahlem makes a mistake, it is a crime. When an Ulbricht, a Grotewohl, or even a Zhukov makes a mistake, it should also be a mistake, also be a crime.”⁴⁹ By invoking Dahlem, Schütz attempted to exploit divisions within the East German leadership, as Franz Dahlem, recently expelled from the SED, represented an anti-Ulbricht alternative for leadership in the GDR. Schütz then declared that the people of the Eastern Zone

⁴⁷ Ibid. Pankow referred to the outer district of East Berlin where many of the SED leadership lived and worked. “Sie forderten freie Wahlen, sie forderten den Ruecktritt der Pankower Regierung, sie forderten die Freiheiten, die uns in Westberlin und der Bundesrepublik vergoennt sind.”

⁴⁸ Ibid., “Wir waeren weltfremd und des Vertrauens unserer Hoerer nicht wuerdig, wenn wir einer solchen Forderung die Berechtigung nicht zuerkennen wuerden. Wir wollen es einfacher sagen: Was die Bevoelkerung Ostberlins und der Sowjetzone heute will und was sie durch die ihr gegebenen Kampfmittel als erreichbar ansieht, ist nicht mehr und nicht weniger als das Ende der totalitarian Herrschaft der deutschen Satelliten des Kremls.”

⁴⁹ Ibid. “Wenn ein Matern oder ein Dahlem einen “Fehler” begeht, so ist, so war es ein Verbrechen. Wenn ein Ulbricht, ein Grotewohl, selbst ein Tschuikow einen Fehler begeht, so sollte es auch ein Fehler, auch ein Verbrechen sein.”

could no longer tolerate such mistakes. Ulbricht and his associates needed to be made to account. As Schütz came to a close, he encouraged the strikers to push for greater demands. As he said, referring to the day's achievements, "We know from the delegation of East Berlin construction workers, that they are not willing to be satisfied with this victory."⁵⁰ He went on to declare, "We feel connected with our listeners in East Berlin and the Soviet Zone in the ambition, of achieving the greatest gains, of exploiting the insecurity of the party functionaries, to profit from the uncertainty of the SED Central Committee vis-a-vis the aims of the Kremlin, without which the single danger stops, which would be avoided."⁵¹ He closed, provocatively, stating that, "We, dear listeners, would be happy if we could continue to report of further victories in the coming days."⁵²

Schütz's June 16, 1953 commentary presents one of the clearest examples of how tenuous RIAS's attempts to balance accurate reporting with engagement could often be. Throughout, he stressed that it was the workers who were driving the protest and it was the workers who were formulating the demands. The demands, Schütz stressed, were not being made by RIAS itself. Nevertheless, Schütz never hid his support for the demands or his sympathy for the protest. Furthermore, he proclaimed it was RIAS's obligation to give its approval to the movement and throw its support behind the action. Through the commentary, Schütz made RIAS a partner of the movement, stressing the bond between the station and its listeners and pushing protesters to try and achieve greater gains.

⁵⁰ Ibid., "Wir wissen von der Delegation der Ostberliner Bauarbeiter, dass sie nicht gewillt sind, sich mit diesem Sieg zu begnuegen."

⁵¹ Ibid., "Wir fühlen uns unseren Hörern in Ostberlin und der Sowjetzone verbunden in dem Bestreben, das Möglichste zu erreichen, die Unsicherheit der Funktionäre auszunutzen, von der Ungewissheit des ZK der SED gegenüber den Absichten des Kremls zu profitieren, ohne dass sich der Einzelne Gefahren aussetzt, die zu vermeiden wären."

⁵² Ibid., "Wir, verehrte Hörerinnen und Hörer, würden uns glücklich schätzen, wenn wir Ihnen in den nächsten Tagen von weiteren Siegen berichten könnten."

The picture Schütz depicted of the movement is remarkable. Even though historians have since concluded that the uprisings of June 16-17 were disorganized and lacked effective leadership,⁵³ Schütz nevertheless created the image of a coordinated movement capable of toppling the German Democratic Republic. Most striking was his optimism. Throughout the broadcast, Schütz made his belief clear that the fundamental democratic demands were achievable goals. There was no consideration that the Soviet Union would take action. Perhaps the excitement of events and wishful thinking played a role in Schütz optimistic assessment of the situation in East Berlin. It is also likely that Schütz did believe the protests were better organized and coordinated than they really were. Yet, the RIAS program director failed to acknowledge the very real possibility of a harsh and brutal crackdown on the part of the Soviets. Despite being a commentator responsible for presenting an analysis of events, he nevertheless ignored this very real possibility.

Following Schütz's 7:45 pm commentary, RIAS broadcast a variety of speakers and commentaries throughout the night. At 10:15 pm, the West German Minister for All-German affairs, Jakob Kaiser, went on the air to affirm his support for the protests and beseech the Soviets and Western Allies to use the events as an opportunity to reach a quick decision on German unification.⁵⁴ Thus, Kaiser presented one of the first instances in which the demonstrations in East Germany were linked with the issue of reunification. At 11:00 pm, RIAS once again broadcast a report on the strikes in East Berlin and the protesters' demands. It repeated the broadcast at midnight, and then at one, two, three,

⁵³ See for example Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany 1918-1990*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 191 and Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 77.

⁵⁴ RIAS Berlin, *Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, Tätigkeitsbericht der Hauptabteilung Politik des Rundfunks im Amerikanischen Sektor in der Zeit vom 16. Juni bis zum 23. Juni, 1953," Deutschland Radio Berlin Archiv, 6.

and four o'clock during the morning of June 17.⁵⁵ Throughout the night, the station also repeated Schütz's June 16 commentary at 12:10 am and 2:10 am.⁵⁶ At 1:21 am, the station broadcast an interview with an eyewitness of demonstrations at Alexanderplatz in East Berlin. The interview focused on the lack of police action on the part of East German security forces, thus adding to the sense that the security apparatus of the GDR had collapsed.⁵⁷

On June 17, 1953 at 5 am, RIAS reported that the protesters would be assembling at Straussberger Platz to stage a larger demonstration. The day's production of *Werktag der Zone* was broadcast at its regular time of 5:35 am. The program presented an analysis similar to Schütz's June 16 broadcast. For months, the speaker noted, the radio show had made an effort to represent the workers of the GDR and represent their concerns and interests. The events of the previous week had revealed that the SED was unable to cope with the concerns of East German workers. But now, the stakes were much higher. "But yesterday, it was no longer about the quotas. From the protests against arbitrary reduction of wages has emerged a protest against the entire regime demanding free elections and the resignation of the Zone government."⁵⁸ The speaker then affirmed that RIAS was "on your side."⁵⁹ The program then announced the rallying place at the Straussberger Platz, reading out the announcement of the protest leaders.⁶⁰ Once again, the station was openly affirming solidarity and support for the protests in the GDR. At the same time, it also stressed that the movement was "no longer about the

⁵⁵ Schütz, et al, *Nachrichten-Berichterstattung über Zonenaufrüstung*, June 23, 1953.

⁵⁶ RIAS Berlin, *Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁸ WZ June 17, 1953, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, A 104-00-05/0002.

⁵⁹ Ibid. "...wir sind auf Eurer Seite...."

⁶⁰ Ibid. "

quotas” but was about democratic reforms. During the program, the head of the West Berlin branch of the Deutsches Gewerkschaftsbund, Ernst Scharnowski gave a commentary praising the protesters, affirming the solidarity of West Berlin’s unions with the strikers, and again reaffirmed the general theme that the protests were not just about workers’ rights, but fundamental human rights.⁶¹

Beginning at 7am, RIAS broadcast news every half hour on the demonstrations at Straussberger Platz and Stalinallee. Between 12:30 pm and midnight, RIAS broadcast ten news reports devoted entirely to the events in East Germany.⁶² East Germans seeking out radio as an escape from the political upheavals taking place around them would still be confronted with the events, as music programming was frequently interrupted to provide listeners with updates on the events in the Eastern Sector.⁶³ RIAS was helping to define the June 17 demonstrations. Eye witness accounts, preemptions, constant news flashes, interrupted programs, and commentaries describing great victories and the potential for real political change, meant that individuals who listened to the station throughout East Germany (which was a majority of radio listeners in the GDR according to contemporary United States Information Agency polling),⁶⁴ could not escape the presence of the demonstrations or the sense of anticipation that was defining RIAS news broadcasts. An individual could not listen to the station for an hour without being reminded of the events taking place. Each report also made sure to stress the significance of the event, its unprecedented nature, and the very real possibility that it could succeed.

⁶¹ RIAS Berlin, *Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, 7.

⁶² Schütz, et al., *Nachrichten-Berichterstattung über Zonenaufrstand*, June 23, 1953.

⁶³ Geänderte Mittelwelle: Sendefolge am Mittwoch d. 17.6.1953, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, A 104-00-05/0002.

⁶⁴ *Country Report on Radio: East Germany*, February 1953, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Office of Research, Reports and Related Studies Maintained or Sponsored by the International Evaluation Staff (IEV) and other Offices of the Department of State, 1948-1953, Entry 1007A, 250/67/04/04-250/67/05/03, Box 29.

On the morning of June 17, the strikes and protests, which had up until then been focused in East Berlin, exploded across the German Democratic Republic. In all, at least 500,000 people in 560 towns throughout East Germany participated in demonstrations of some kind.⁶⁵ Workers, students, and farmers all participated in the protests, leading to a general “peoples’ uprising” throughout East Germany.⁶⁶ As the revolts moved across East Germany, RIAS’s staff and officials from the Soviet Union both perceived RIAS’s effect. As noted above, Egon Bahr has frequently noted how reports from various protesters throughout the GDR were making the same demands as those in East Berlin, using the same language and slogans of the delegation that had approached RIAS the previous afternoon.⁶⁷ In his memoirs, he recalled that the demands presented in the previous evening’s commentaries were being used in protests and emblazoned on placards throughout the GDR, often in the same language as RIAS had presented them. This view was corroborated by Mathias Walden, who noted the effect the instant and simultaneous broadcasting of news could have. “Dresdeners know what is happening at that moment in Magdeburg, Leipzigers listen, what is playing out in Berlin.”⁶⁸ Radio’s ability to provide information instantaneously and simultaneously throughout the GDR demonstrated RIAS’s effectiveness and critical role in the demonstrations. A report made by Soviet observers recently found in Russian archives from June 24, 1953, also noted the use of slogans. Co-authored by the Soviet’s representative in East Germany, Vladimir Semyonov, “In all these political slogans the influence of the broadcasts of the

⁶⁵ Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 165. 51.

⁶⁶ Although Baring’s seminal study focuses on workers, recent scholarship has shown that other social groups participated in the demonstrations. See Manfred Hagen, *DDR: Juni ’53, die erste Volkserhebung im Stalinismus*, (Stuttgart, 1992), Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten*, (Munich 1993), and Gregory R. Witkowski, “Peasants Revolt? Re-evaluating the 17 June Uprising in East Germany,” *German History*, Vol. 24, no. 2, (2006).

⁶⁷ Egon Bahr, *Zu Meiner Zeit*, 80.

⁶⁸ Walden, “Der 16. und 17. Juni im Rias,” 18.

American radio station in Berlin, 'RIAS,' was felt."⁶⁹ Importantly, the Soviet officials noted that in East Berlin and Magdeburg strikingly similar slogans were used: demands for free elections, lower prices, and the abolition of the work quotas. The observers drew the conclusion that, "The organized nature of all the demonstrations calls attention to itself: the presence of slogans written in advance and nearly identical in all areas of the GDR, the presence of communications [equipment] and automobiles, identical duration of actions, demonstration routes and gathering places determined in advance (Berlin, Leipzig, Berlin, and others)."⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that both Soviet observers and RIAS reporters believed the revolt was more coordinated and organized than it really was.

Throughout June 17, RIAS presented eyewitness accounts, commentaries, news broadcasts, and a declaration made by all three of West Berlin's political parties.⁷¹ At a meeting between Semyanov and SED leaders who had fled to the Soviet headquarters in Karlshorst, the Soviet representative informed his German clients, "RIAS is broadcasting that there is no government any more within the GDR. Well, that is almost true."⁷² By midday Soviet commanders in East Germany deployed tanks throughout the state to quell the protests. Throughout the day, RIAS continued to broadcast news of the strikes.⁷³ By the end of the day, however, it was obvious there was little the protesters could do against the Soviet troops. By the evening Russian observers were acknowledging that RIAS had

⁶⁹ Report from Vasilii Sokolovskii, Vladimir Semyonov, and Pavel Yudin, "On the Events of 17-19 June in Berlin and the GDR and Certain Conclusions from These Events," 24. June 1953, in Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 257-285.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁷¹ RIAS Berlin, *Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, 9.

⁷² Rudolf Herrnstadt, *Das Herrnsstadt-Dokument: Das Politbüro der SED und die Geschichte des 17. Juni 1953*, edited by Nadja Stulz-Herrnsstadt, (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), 83. Quoted in Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 166.

⁷³ Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 1953, xxxiv.

called upon protesters to submit and avoid any clashes with Soviet troops.⁷⁴ It is telling that the Soviets were listening to the station and relying on it as a means to calm the crowds, rather than the GDR's own radio broadcasters.

A RIAS newscast from that evening announced that the West Berlin House of Representatives had voted to use any means necessary to support the protesters across the sector border.⁷⁵ However, the broadcast was dominated by a somber tone as it had become obvious the protests were being suppressed. This language of frustration and anger characterized many of RIAS's broadcasts during the days immediately after the uprising was suppressed by the Soviets. Commentaries broadcast over the course of the next three days often sounded like verbal requiems. The number of dead was rising, demonstrators wounded near the sector border had been taken to West Berlin hospitals, and shots could still be heard into the evening hours. The station reported the Soviet curfew order, but also noted continued protests. At the same time, the report attempted to present a positive assessment of the events. It closed by noting the rest of the world was watching, a theme that would dominate RIAS's post-June 17 broadcasts. "The entire free world follows the events with great sympathy."⁷⁶ A broadcast from later that evening again noted the entire free world was watching, and reported Eisenhower's observations. "In Washington, President Eisenhower called the demonstration of the East Berlin population an extremely important event and a evidence of communists' lies."⁷⁷ The

⁷⁴ Telephongram from Vladimir Semyonov and Marshal Vasilii Sokolovskii to Vyacheslav Molotov and Nikolai Bulganin Reporting on the Situation in East Berlin, 17 June 1953, as of 11:00 CET, in Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 1953, 200.

⁷⁵ RIAS News Broadcast, June 17, 1953, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B 203-00-02/0001.

⁷⁶ Ibid., "In der gesamten freien Welt werden die Ereignisse mit starker Anteilnahme verfolgt."

⁷⁷ Ibid., "Präsident Eisenhower nannte in Washington, die Demonstrationen der ostberliner Bevölkerung ein äusserst bedeutsames Ereignis und einen Beweis für die Lügen der Kommunisten."

same report noted statements of support from chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Alexander Wiley and Konrad Adenauer.⁷⁸

The June 18, 1953 *Wertag der Zone* presented a vivid overview of the previous day's events. The report, drawn from eyewitness accounts and second hand reports, casts the events in a dramatic narrative, beginning by describing initial protests in Magdeburg. Here, for the first time, RIAS began the process of constructing an explanatory narrative with which to analyze the uprising:

Magdeburg: June 17, 1953. Work begins at a Magdeburg factory. The workers discuss amongst themselves. The Berliners went on the march yesterday. The construction workers from the Stalinallee were the first. And what are we doing? They make a banner. Magdeburg will follow Berlin.⁷⁹

The broadcast subsequently related how the workers marching through the Karl-Marx Werk, which they proceed to call its original name, Schaeffer and Budenberg, and then described their march to the abandoned SED offices. Subsequently, the protesters storm the Palace of Justice, free prisoners and burn files. On their goals, the speaker noted: “‘We demand free elections’—screams one chant,—‘Freedom.’”⁸⁰

The report then described the emergence of the Soviet tanks at 2:30 pm: “Around 2:30 the first Soviet armored scout cars appear. A short time after the first Soviet tanks emerge. *They drive into the crowd. They shoot. An 11-year-old boy is shot. Dead.*

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ WZ, June 18, 1953, DRA Potsdam RIAS Depositum, A 104-00-05/0002. “Magdeburg, 17. Juni 1953. Arbeitsbeginn in einem Magdeburger Betrieb. Die Arbeiter diskutieren. Die Berliner sind gestern marschiert. Die Bauarbeiter von der Stalinallee als erste. Und was machen wir? Ein Transparent wird gemalt. Darauf sieht: Magdeburg folgt Berlin.”

⁸⁰ Ibid., “ ‘Wir fordern freie Wahlen’—schreit ein Sprechchor—‘Freiheit.’”

There are deaths on this June 17, 1953 in Magdeburg.”⁸¹ Interestingly, the italicized portions, perhaps the most dramatic, are crossed out in the manuscript. Whether this was done for the sake of time constraints, stylistic revision, or on the orders of RIAS editor is uncertain.⁸² However, the language is the most provocative and critical of the Soviet’s actions, and was likely removed to soften the broadcast.

Following the report on Magdeburg, a second speaker continued, noting, “We are reporting on June 17, 1953. Not on Berlin. Not on a District Capital, but on a city of 20,000 inhabitants, Rosslau bei Dessau.”⁸³ Following this came a description of protests in the small Saxon town, then a commentary on uprisings in Bitterfeld, and Leipzig. Each account deliberately mirrored the other. They all began with the workers’ decisions to march. Then followed an account of their demands followed by a description of Soviet tanks putting down the protest movements. The purpose of the broadcast’s style is clear: to characterize June 17 as an event affecting all of East Germany. At the close of the commentary, one speaker reported: “There are marches in Chemnitz, Premnitz, Gera, Erfurt, Leuna, Buna, in Warnemünd...” Immediately, in order to emphasize the Soviet intervention and the manner in which it silenced the protests, a second speaker interrupted and completed the sentence, “...and then the armored cars arrive, and then the tanks, and the state of emergency. The Soviets intervene. They knew: the party, the Volkspolizei, and the *Stasi*, they no longer work. They are impotent. Thus: the tanks

⁸¹ Ibid. “Gegen 14 Uhr 30 erschienen die ersten sowjetischen Panzerspähwagen. Kurze Zeit drauf die ersten sowjetischen Panzer. Sie fahren in die Menge. Es wird geschossen. Ein 11-jährige junge wird erschossen. Tot. Es gibt Tote an diesem 17. Juni 1953 in Magdeburg.”

⁸² The broadcast manuscript was published in RIAS’s own official report of the events from later that month and can also be found in Herbert Kundler’s history of the station. Both are edited versions, meaning it is likely the broadcast version did not include the lines concerning the tanks storming the crowd and the murder of an 11 year old boy. See RIAS Berlin, *Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, 11 and Kundler, *RIAS Berlin*, 185.

⁸³ Ibid., “Wir berichten über den 17. Juni 1953. Nicht über Berlin. Nicht über eine Bezirkshauptstadt, sondern über eine Stadt, mit 20,000 Einwohnern, Rosslau bei Dessau.”

roll!”⁸⁴ The first speaker concluded the commentary by condemning the SED’s efforts to describe the uprising as the act of fascists and western agents. “With these declarations, they believe they can excuse their impotence.”⁸⁵

Throughout June 16-18, 1953, the focus of the protesters had been on conditions within East Germany. The major demands had also been East German concerns: free elections in the Zone, lower quotas, and freedom for political prisoners. Yet, almost as soon as the events had come to a close, West German statesmen began the process that would transform June 17th into the “Day of German Unity.” RIAS played a role in this process from the beginning. During the June 18, 1953 broadcast of *Berlin spricht zur Zone*, at 7:40pm, Egon Bahr gave a commentary that transformed the uprising against the SED into an uprising for German reunification.⁸⁶ He opened by declaring: “What perhaps hardly anyone in the west believed possible, workers and other members of the population have demonstrated with a single will. They demonstrate not only against the quotas and the high cost of living, but for something else, for their unification with the rest of Germany, for freedom.”⁸⁷ RIAS’s previous commentaries, notably Schütz’s June 16 broadcast, had also noted that the demonstrators sought more than the reduction of quotas. But linking freedom with unification was new, and was to become a common element of the narrative of June 17 created in West Germany. Bahr noted that the people

⁸⁴ Ibid., “Es wurde marschiert in: Chemnitz, in Premnitz, in Gera, in Erfurt, in Leuna, bei Buna, in Arnemünde, in Rathenow...und dann kamen die Panzerspähwagen, und die Panzer und der Ausnahmezustand. Die Sowjets griffen ein. Die Sowjets wussten: Die Partei, die VP und der SSD, sie schaffen es nicht mehr. Sie sind unfähig. Also: Panzer marsch!”

⁸⁵ Ibid., “Mit dieser Erklärung glauben sie ihre eigene Unfähigkeit entschuldigen zu können.”

⁸⁶ BsZ, June 18, 1953. The transcript was published in RIAS Berlin, *Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, 15-17. An original manuscript, dated June 17, can be found in Ewing Papers, Box 1, Folder 8: RIAS Special Reports, Marshall Library. Citations come from the text published by RIAS.

⁸⁷ Ibid., “Was wohl kaum jemand im Westen für möglich gehalten hat, die Arbeiterschaft und sich anschliessende Menschen aus allen Bevölkerungsschichten haben aus eigenen Willen demonstriert. Demonstriert nicht nur gegen die Normen und die hohen Lebenshaltungskosten, sondern für etwas, für ihre Vereinigung mit dem übrigen Deutschland, für die Freiheit.”

who protested against the SED had much to be proud of, and the events of the previous day were a success. “A success not only for the population of East Berlin, a success not only for the population of the Zone, a success for German unity, for today the East Berlin demonstrations is the topic in the entire world.”⁸⁸ The uprising, “ruled the headlines of the world press as never before since the blockade.”⁸⁹ The uprising was, “irrefutable evidence of the will for German unity.”⁹⁰ At the same time, the workers had delivered the SED its “greatest defeat” since its creation. The world had seen evidence, for the first time, that part of the German population had, though unorganized, found the means and the will to press for freedom against a hated regime. At the same time, Bahr lamented that Germans living in West Berlin like Bahr and his colleagues at RIAS were unable to do more to help. In a telling comment not found in the original manuscript, Bahr declared:

It was tragic, wanting to help and not being able to provide direct assistance. It would not have been difficult to get West Berlin’s population to their feet with a fiery appeal, and who would have refused to join in? It is historic that this did not happen. It remains to be proven that any plea for help—and men came to RIAS and brought an appeal—has been rejected—as difficult as it was—, as we can now see, the appeal has been rightly refuted, to say nothing of the stupidity to want people to believe that the Americans or some clandestine people caused the reactions in the Zone.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., “Berlin beherrscht die Schlagzeilen der Welpresse wie niemals seit der Blockade.”

⁹⁰ Ibid., “Nicht nur, weil das Ausland einen unwiderlegbaren Beweis für den Willen zur deutschen Einheit bekam, sondern weil hier im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes die Brüchigkeit eines verhassten Regimes demonstriert wurde.”

⁹¹ Ibid., “Es war tragisch, helfen zu wollen und nicht unmittelbar helfen zu dürfen. Es wäre ein Kleines gewesen, durch einen flammenden Aufruf Westberlin auf die Beine zu bringen, und wer hätte sich versagt? Es ist historisch, daß dies nicht geschah. Es ist zu beweisen, daß jegliche Bitten nach Hilfe--und die Menschen kamen zum RIAS und brachten die Aufrufe--abgeschlagen wurden und--so schwer es war --, wie man jetzt sieht mit Recht abgeschlagen worden sind, ganz zu schweigen von der Dummheit, Menschen glauben machen zu wollen, amerikanische oder sonst welche geheimnisvollen Menschen hätten die Reaktion in der Zone verursacht.”

It is possible that the section, which focuses on the inability of West Berliners to do more to help, was added in a moment of frustration as the uprising was quickly suppressed by the Soviet troops. Its structure and line of thought are disorganized, and it is even possible this departure from the original script was improvised on the air. Like Schütz, Bahr cited RIAS's moral obligations. A dispute between Ewing and Bahr, related in Bahr's memoirs, provides insight into the sentiment behind this broadcast. As Bahr recounts, many felt that RIAS needed to do more to support the uprisings on June 17. Ewing was concerned about how the Soviets would perceive the RIAS broadcasts, especially calls for a general strike. The previous day, HICOG Eastern Affairs Element Chief Charles Hulick had phoned Ewing and warned him: "My God, Gordon, watch your step. You can start a war with that station."⁹² When Bahr pressed Ewing on the issue, the RIAS Political Director asked him what would happen if the Soviet tanks decided to continue moving into the western sectors. Bahr responded that such an occurrence was "politically impossible."⁹³ Ewing asked Bahr how he could be so certain, and would only continue broadcasting the calls for a general strike if Bahr could guarantee such an intervention would never happen. Ewing recalled the tension in the RIAS studios those two days. "But there were some [editors] who would have liked to do a lot of fire-eating on the air, of course, bound to be. We had hot arguments but in the end we had no real difficulty in getting a line for the evening broadcast that was actually going on the air."⁹⁴ Though he did not mention Bahr by name, he was certainly thinking of Bahr and possibly

⁹² Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 49.

⁹³ Bahr, *Zu Meiner Zeit*, "Ich antwortete, das sei politisch unmöglich." 78-79.

⁹⁴ Ewing Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 58.

Schütz. Bahr's June 18th commentary expressed deep frustration with both RIAS's actions and the reaction of the Western powers during the uprising.

The addition did not distract Bahr from his predominant concern, which was to characterize the events of June 17 as an assertion of German national identity. The events in Berlin, Bahr hoped, would lead the Western Allies and Soviets to come together and agree on a solution to the German question and unification. The Soviet Union had abandoned the GDR, forced it to reverse its policies, and had undermined its functionaries, revealing their lack of concern for the current state. He closed with an optimistic outlook, "The power of the regime was reduced, the Zone's worth to the Soviets diminished, and that will accelerate German unity. There can be no doubt that the days have accelerated the path towards unity. All Germans have the population of East Berlin and the population of the Soviet Zone to thank for this."⁹⁵

Bahr's assessment was certainly overly optimistic. The value of the GDR to the Soviet Union became, ironically, *greater*, as a result of the uprising. Since many linked the uprising to Beria's proposed path of reform, his opponents in Moscow used the uprising as a means of undermining him and eventually orchestrating the Soviet leader's arrest and execution. Consequently, Beria's accusers were forced to legitimate their power by insuring the survival of the GDR. The connection between June 17 and the succession crisis in Moscow had improbably given the GDR a new lease on life. If anything, the uprising had made unification less likely than ever before.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ibid., "Die Macht des Regimes wurde verkleinert, der Wert der Zone für die Sowjets wurde verringert, und das ist der Weg, der die deutsche Einheit beschleunigen wird, und diese Tage werden die Einheit beschleunigen, daran kann kein Zweifel sein. Alle Deutschen haben dies der Bevölkerung Ostberlins und der Bevölkerung der noch sowjetische besetzten Zone zu danken."

⁹⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 43.

Bahr's commentary is an important contribution to West German political culture. By linking the uprising to the quest for German reunification, Bahr and others lay the groundwork that would transform June 17th into the "Day of German Unity." This idea was reinforced when West Berlin mayor Ernst Reuter delivered a RIAS commentary following Bahr's broadcast on the night of June 18th. Reuter gave a commentary that again stressed the importance of German reunification. "But we will continue do everything to attend to the goal we have set for ourselves: that Germany will once again be reunited. There is no problem that is as pressing as the reunification of Germany. There is no rest, no peace that does not honestly deal with this problem. And I would like to say, for everyone with a heart, everyone with understanding, everyone with feelings, there can be no sacrifice large enough in order to achieve this goal—the unification of Germany—through a true peace."⁹⁷ Like Bahr, Reuter linked peace with German reunification. June 17 was an uprising for reunification, an event affecting all Germans, not just those living in East Germany.

A RIAS newscast from June 19, 1953 provides a good overview of the type of news stories the station was broadcasting throughout the days following the June 17th uprising. It presented a somber overview of events without trying to cast them in a favorable light. It began by noting the increased presence of soldiers throughout East Berlin, a sign of the curfew and the state of emergency that had been instituted by the Soviet authorities in East Germany and then related how governments around the world had expressed sympathy and solidarity with those East Germans killed during the

⁹⁷ Ernst Reuter spricht, June 18, 1953, produced in RIAS Berlin, *Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, 19-20. "Aber wir werden alles tun, um unsere Arbeit, die wir immer uns zum Ziele gesetzt haben—Deutschland wieder zu vereinigung—fortzusetzen. Es gibt keinen Frieden, ehe dieses Problem nicht gelöst ist. Und ich möchte auch sagen, für jeden von uns, der Herz hat, der Verstand hat, der Sinn hat—kann kein Opfer groß genug sein, um dieses Ziel—Vereinigung Deutschlands—in einer echten Freiheit zu erreichen."

uprising. The broadcast closed by paraphrasing a message from the West Berlin DGB that invoked the memory of Lenin's famous phrase. "The workers demanded freedom, bread, and peace, yet their answer was salvos of gunfire."⁹⁸

RIAS was a participant in the events of June 17 and played a decisive role in analyzing and explaining the uprising. Beginning with the June 16 4:30 pm newscast and Schütz's 7:45 pm commentary, the station helped spread news of the East Berlin protests throughout the GDR. Furthermore, it had encouraged East Germans to press for more radical and sweeping goals and had helped coordinate the 7:00 Strausberger Platz Rally. Critically, the station had also spread the idea that the protests had a realistic chance of success. RIAS, which had originally simply been a shaper of rhetoric and political culture, had become an active political actor in the events taking place in East Germany. RIAS did not cause June 17. However, the events would not have transpired as they did without the stations' active involvement. The RIAS broadcasts followed a programming tradition that had been developed since the Berlin airlift. The station had been actively attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the GDR since 1949, and it is critical to note that the same programs it had broadcast to do this since 1949 and 1950, *Werktag der Zone* and *Berlin spricht zur Zone*, played an important part in shaping the discourse and ideas of the June 17 Uprising.

It is important to note the role RIAS played in shaping the conception and narrative of June 17. It may not have played a direct role in managing the events, but it certainly participated in explaining them to listeners. From the moment the demonstrations began, Schütz, Bahr, and their colleagues set about examining the events

⁹⁸ RIAS News Broadcast, June 19, 1953, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B 203-00-02/0001, "Die Arbeiter hätten Freiheit, Brot und Frieden gefordert, doch seien Gewehrsalven die Antwort gewesen."

and placing them within a broader context. Thus, even before the protests broke out across the GDR, Eberhard Schütz was already stressing the democratic demands of the strikers. Their demands for lower quotas were acknowledged, but considered only secondary to the more radical goals of fundamentally changing the government of the GDR. By June 18, Egon Bahr was already describing June 17 as a push for German unity and an expression of the East German peoples' yearning for reunification with the rest of Germany. Democratic reform, change in the East German government, and peace were all linked with unification. Thus, RIAS participated in the process that transformed June 17 from a workers' uprising into a popular uprising in the name of German unity.

East German Radio, June 17, and X Day

Perhaps the most notable element of East German political broadcasts during June 17 is their silence. RIAS effectively ruled East Germany's airwaves during the uprising, to the point that the SED and Soviet officials themselves were relying on it for information during the protests. As Ingrid Pietrzynski writes, radio stations reported "as good as nothing" about the events on June 17.⁹⁹ Regular news broadcasts were sent, but without any mention of the work stoppages and demonstrations. This silence was decisive. As noted above, East German listeners often tuned into a variety of radio stations along with RIAS to gain news and information. The failure of the GDR's stations to confront the protests meant that RIAS's broadcasts about the uprising went unchallenged. For the most part, light music was broadcast, further allowing RIAS to

⁹⁹ Ingrid Pietrzynski, "Der 17. Juni 1953 im Rundfunk der DDR Ursachen, Verlauf und Folgen," in Klaus Arnold, Christopher Classen, *Zwischen Pop und Propaganda: Radio in der DDR*, (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2004) 113-129.

control and manage the story throughout the day. It would not be until the evening of June 17 that an East German station broadcast a commentary on the current events in the GDR, over a day since RIAS first began broadcasting news of the demonstrations during the afternoon of June 16.¹⁰⁰

Thus, East Germany's radio stations reacted in much the same way as the rest of the GDR's institutions. Panicked and shaken by the size of the uprising, it was shocked into a state of confusion until the Soviet troops brought stability back to the GDR. The cause for the silence was a mixture of confusion and Ulbricht's own order to State Radio Committee Chairman (StRK) Kurt Heiss, to maintain normal programming.¹⁰¹ Just as RIAS was helping to create June 17, East Germany's three Berlin broadcasters tried to make it into a non-event. This approach was harshly criticized by many in the GDR, particularly by members of the East German intelligentsia such as Stefan Heym and Bertolt Brecht.¹⁰²

The journalists at the GDR's three Berlin radio stations were nevertheless faced with considerable intellectual challenges. First, the stations needed to explain and justify the sudden policy change of the SED and its adoption of the New Course without undermining the SED's claim to authority. Second, in the wake of the June 17 uprising, the GDR's stations needed to explain why it was that the people of the GDR, the German workers' state, rose up against the SED. In answering these two challenges, East German radio participated in the construction of a narrative that explained how an uprising of workers could occur in the workers' state of East Germany. The narrative placed the

¹⁰⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, all radio operations in the GDR were centralized in Berlin in 1952. Berliner Rundfunk and all other stations were dissolved and replaced with Berlin I, II, and III. Although each of these focused on different areas of programming, political commentaries and news were often broadcast on all three at different times.

¹⁰¹ Pietrzynski, "Der 17. Juni 1953 im Rundfunk der DDR," 117.

¹⁰² Ibid., 120.

blame for the uprising on a US sponsored fascist coup attempt. An important component of this interpretation was RIAS's broadcasts, which the East Germans accused of directing the uprising through the use of both coded and overt messages.

The process began as soon as the New Course was made public on June 11. On June 13, Karl Eduard von Schnitzler gave a commentary that attempted to explain how the adoption of the New Course, while an explicit admission that the SED had made mistakes, was nevertheless a testament to its authority and infallibility. The title already indicated his goal: "A Confession of Mistakes: Evidence of Strength." The commentary was broadcast on all three Berlin stations over the course of the next two days. Von Schnitzler opened with a simple declaration: "A government has made mistakes; and it admits these mistakes with frankness and is using drastic measures to correct these mistakes."¹⁰³ It must have been surprising to hear a GDR reporter like von Schnitzler admit that the government had made mistakes. That he repeated the word three times in a single sentence must have been equally surprising. The Party had made recommendations based on a frank self-criticism of its policies.

Von Schnitzler continued by arguing the SED's decision was unprecedented and marked a decisive turn in German history. "This is something new in Germany," he proclaimed. "Hitherto, no government and no ruling party, though it might have wanted to, could dare to acknowledge mistakes, or even to take the helm and energetically alter the course of the ship of state in order to bring it onto the right course once again."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Sendemanuskript, "Eingeständnis von Fehlern—ein Beweis der Stärke," Eduard von Schnitzler, June 13, 1953, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 095-00-01/0002, Tsig 0125. "Eine Regierung hat Fehler gemacht; und sie gesteht diese Fehler freimütig ein und trifft tiefgreifende Massnahmen, um diese Fehler zu korrigieren."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., "Das ist etwas Neues in Deutschland...Keine Regierung und keine Regierungspartei hat es bisher wagen können, noch hätte sie es gewollt, begangene Fehler zuzugeben, oder gar das Ruder energisch herumzureissen, um das Staatsschiff wieder auf den richtigen Kurs zu bringen."

Only one party and one government could do this. “Comprehending past mistakes, frankly admitting them, and boldly correcting them, is not evidence of weakness, but of strength, of the authority deeply rooted in the people, of the faithfulness to the peoples’ interests, of sincerity and honesty.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, according to the logic of von Schnitzler’s argument, the party was always right because it could admit when it was wrong.

Von Schnitzler continued, further stressing the link between the frank admissions of mistakes with strength. This frank discussion distinguished the GDR from Adenauer’s regime in Bonn. There, honest discussion ‘was impossible. As a consequence, the interests of the people were ignored and neglected. In contrast, the SED’s frank self-criticism strengthened and fortified its authority and allowed it to better serve the interests of the German people. Von Schnitzler proceeded to praise the New Course, declaring that there was “no doubt” that the new policies would improve the economic situation in East Germany and provide better conditions for the East German people. The commentary praised the major tenets of the New Course, specifically noting the provisions encouraging remigration to the GDR and a more conciliatory relationship with the East German churches on the part of the SED. The careful “examination” of past criminal procedures would, “without a doubt,” increase the trust in the democratic order. Von Schnitzler even expressed support for private industry. “At this juncture, the importance that will devolve to the trades and small and medium sized private factories, who constitute such an important factor in our consumer goods industry, is self evident.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., “Die Einsicht begangener Fehler, ihr freimütiges Eingeständnis und die kühne Korrektur sind keine Zeichen der Schwäche, sondern Beweis der Stärke, der tief im Volke wurzelnden Autorität, der Ergebnisheit gegenüber dem Volke und seinen Interessen, der Aufrichtigkeit und Ehrlichkeit.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., “Es liegt auf der Hand, welche Bedeutung hierbei, dem Handwerk und den kleinen und mittleren Privatbetrieben zufällt, die in unserer Konsumgüter-Industrie einen wichtigen Faktor darstellen.”

Citing the Politbüro's proceedings from June 9, von Schnitzler declared that the primary goal of these changes was to lay the groundwork for the reunification of Germany. Von Schnitzler noted, "Today, the unity of Germany stands as the decisive question."¹⁰⁷ Again, Adenauer's West German government was invoked as the chief obstacle to unification, and the Chancellor's policies were blamed for creating a spirit of hostility in West Germany. The commentary closed by paraphrasing the words of August Bebel, the nineteenth century Social Democratic leader, by declaring that "one should look less at the mouth and more at the finger."¹⁰⁸ Actions spoke louder than words, and the GDR, by adopting the sweeping provisions of the New Course, was demonstrating its commitment to German unification.

Von Schnitzler's commentary belongs to a series of remarkable commentaries presented by the East German radio stations in June and July of 1953. The broadcast was clearly in line with the policy dictates of the SED Politbüro. The party was still the only legitimate force of authority in the GDR, even when it admitted errors. The New Course was praised as a necessary measure, and there was no reason to doubt that it would have an immediate and positive effect. Von Schnitzler endeavored throughout the broadcast to use the SED's admission of errors as evidence of the party's strength. He did not detail what these mistakes were, and instead focused on the actual act of admitting them. His praise of the "frank" acknowledgement of error was anchored to the needs of strengthening the authority of the SED and presenting evidence for the New Course. Thus, although it was unusual for an SED controlled organ to frankly admit that the SED's policies had been wrong, von Schnitzler's commentary nevertheless remained, in

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., "Die Einheit Deutschlands steht heute als die entscheidende Frage vor uns."

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., "Der ehrwürdige August Bebel hat gelehrt, dass man weniger aufs Maul und mehr auf die Finger schauen soll."

terms of its goals and style, fully in line with the type of commentaries East German stations had been broadcasting since 1947.

East German stations continued to develop the ideas of error and mistakes after June 17. On July 2, 1953, roughly two weeks since the uprising, Herbert Gessner presented a broadcast that placed partial blame for the uprising on the radio stations of the GDR. He opened in much the same way von Schnitzler had opened his broadcast on June 13. “Our radio has, for a fairly long time, made a range of mistakes.”¹⁰⁹ Discussions with workers had revealed this, “plainly and clearly” and it was the obligation of East German Radio to respond accordingly. The focus of Gessner’s discussion was on how East Germany’s radio stations had failed to adequately serve the workers. As the SED had declared on June 21 of the previous month, if the workers do not understand the party, it was not the fault of the workers but the fault of the workers. Furthermore, “If masses of listeners do not understand our radio—and that means, if they turn off the station or go to another station—it is the radio that is guilty, not the listeners.”¹¹⁰ The primary complaint against East German radio stations was that it “white washed” its stories (“Schönfarberei”). Gessner admitted the accusation was true. “In many cases we have broadcast that which has suited us. That must change.”¹¹¹

However, this did not mean the airing of multiple opinions. “Does this mean, that we will broadcast every opinion? That we will not do, we answer plainly and clearly.”¹¹² Nothing aimed at agitating the Soviet Union could be broadcast. At the same time,

¹⁰⁹ Sendemanuskript, Kommentar zum Sonntag, July 2, 1953, Herbert Gessner, BAB, DR 6 193. “Unser Rundfunk hat seit geraumer Zeit eine Reihe ernster Fehler begangen.”

¹¹⁰ Ibid., “Wenn Massen von Hörern unseren Funk nicht verstehen—und das heisst, wenn sie ihn abdrehen oder auf andere Sender gehen—ist der Funk schuld, nicht der Hörer.”

¹¹¹ Ibid., “Wir haben aber vielfach gesendet, was uns genehm war. Das muß man ändern.”

¹¹² Ibid., “Aber heißt das, daß wir jede Meinung senden werden? Das, um auch hier klipp und klar zu antworten, werden wir nicht.”

despite the heated debates over US policy in Germany, nothing attacking the American people themselves would be transmitted. Nothing that could divide the working classes would be broadcast either. This, the commentary declared, was what RIAS had done and doing this had helped fan the flames of June 17 and given, “the leaders of the fascist provocateurs” the chance to assume their former positions as SS commanders. In spite of these goals, there were nevertheless differences of opinion amongst the East German people. These needed to be discussed over the airwaves. However, again, those who sought to follow the Americans and help transform Germany into a nuclear battlefield could never be permitted to speak. Said Gessner, “We are for free discussions about how to prevent war and how to defend peace. However, the microphone is never open to advocate a policy encouraging war.”¹¹³

Yet, Gessner admitted with frankness, the East German radio stations had offered boring broadcasts and insulted the intelligence of its listeners:

When, for example, our news service said, ‘The Bonn War Chancellor Adenauer declared yesterday that the Adenauer Clique will, through inattention to the populations’ desire for peace, proceed with its policy of war,’ that was naturally such nonsense with regards to how it was phrased. Adenauer is not so dumb, as to enunciate such things openly. But, that he, as the representative of the Bonn Regime, through inattention to the populations’ desire for peace, is pursuing a policy that threatens to provoke a war, that is right, that is true.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ibid., “Wir sind für freie Diskussionen darüber, wie ein Krieg verhindert, der Frieden bewahrt werden kann. Für eine Politik der Kriegsvorbereitung jedoch wird bei uns niemals das Mikrofon offen stehen.”

¹¹⁴ Ibid., “Wenn es zum Beispiel in unseren Nachrichtendiensten hieß, „Der Bonner Kriegskanzler Adenauer erklärte gestern, die Adenauer-Clique werde unter Mißachtung des Friedenswillens der Bevölkerung ihre Kriegspolitik fortsetzen“, so war das natürlich Nonsense, was die Formulierung betrifft. So dumm, das offen auszusprechen, ist Adenauer nun einmal nicht. Aber dass der als Vertreter des Bonner Regimes unter Mißachtung des Friedenswillens der Bevölkerung eine Politik verfolgt, die die Gefahr eines Krieges heraufbeschwört: das stimmt, das ist wahr.”

Gessner continued to situate the problem in comparison to RIAS and other western broadcasters. “We have often awkwardly formulated the truth. The Western stations formulate many lies ingeniously.”¹¹⁵ East German stations needed to learn to react faster and present news quicker to prevent the embarrassing situation by which East Germans already heard news from western stations before reading about it in East German newspapers the next day. Gessner implored listeners to come forward with their honest opinions about East German broadcasting, noting that radio broadcasting could not improve unless listeners made their voices heard. Gessner closed with a recapitulation of the major tasks of East German radio: to forge German reunification, its peaceful development, and its peaceful integration into the rest of Europe, guided by the will and interest of the people. “That was our task, which we pursued with, in many respects, rather defective and inadequate measures. This is our task, which we must now pursue with more justice. This remains our task, unchanged in content, that we, my listeners, together with you, will solve with better methods and greater conviction.”¹¹⁶

Gessner’s commentary reads like many of the SED Politbüro and Central Committee meetings held to discuss problems with East German radio. Yet, this frank and critical commentary was transmitted and made public. It reveals an earnest wish to improve the quality and popularity of radio broadcasting in East Germany. On July 8 and 11, Gessner and von Schnitzler respectively gave commentaries focusing on mistakes made by the East German stations. At the same time, Gessner and von Schnitzler had

¹¹⁵ Ibid., “Wir haben Wahrheiten häufig plump formuliert. Die Westsender formulieren viele Lügen raffiniert.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid., “Das war unser Aufgabe, die wir in der Vergangenheit mit in vieler Hinsicht recht mangelhaften und unzulänglichen Mitteln verfolgt haben. Das ist unsere Aufgabe, der wir jetzt besser gerecht werden müssen. Das bleibt unsere Aufgabe, in ihrem Inhalt unverändert, die wir, meine Hörerinnen und Hörer, mit Ihnen zusammen, mit besseren Methoden und mit größerer Kraft der Überzeugung lösen werden.”

been working on a memorandum calling for sweeping changes to be instituted at the East German radio stations. The two reporters, both of whom had been trained at western stations¹¹⁷, were opposed to the radical Stalinization of East German radio and broadcast news. Their reforms called for greater objectivity, a wider survey of different opinions, and programming that focused on all social classes and not just members of the SED.

However, before the memorandum could be made public, the SED made efforts to reassert its authority over the East German radio stations. The GDR radio stations' frequent broadcasts of self-criticism and frank assessments of its effectiveness received a good deal of derision and criticism in the German Democratic Republic's press. On July 17, 1953, the *Berliner Zeitung* featured a cartoon depicting five life-sized, anthropomorphic microphones crying before a group of bewildered and disapproving spectators. The cartoon is marked "Selbstkritik der Mikrofonen."¹¹⁸ At the end of July, the 15th Party Congress of the Central Committee of the SED condemned East German radio for its "discussions of mistakes."¹¹⁹ The StRK report discussing the SED's conclusions reads like the minutes of the meeting held to dismiss Heinz Schmidt from Berlin Rundfunk in 1949. Once again, the Politbüro condemned GDR radio for objectivity and for failing to pursue an adequately revolutionary posture in its broadcasts. The previous approach was marked by "objective tendencies" and "petit bourgeois conceptions." Once again, mistakes in radio broadcasting were due to the lack of appropriate cooperation with cadres and party representatives. There was no discussion of the events of June 17 and GDR Radio's failure to broadcast anything on the events. Instead, the focus of criticism was on von Schnitzler's and Gessner's frequent

¹¹⁷ Von Schnitzler at the BBC and NWDR, Gessner at Radio Munich. See Chapter Two.

¹¹⁸ Pietrzynski, "Der 17. Juni 1953 im Rundfunk der DDR," 121.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 125.

“discussions of mistakes.”¹²⁰ Neither von Schnitzler or Gessner were forced to step down as a result of East German radio broadcasts during July 1953. Their memorandum was never made public. However, the frank admission of mistakes, which began even before June 17, came to an end.

Nevertheless, the SED was aware that something needed to be done to improve the quality of broadcasting. Beginning in the summer of 1953, the StRK introduced measures aimed at improving cultural and entertainment programming.¹²¹ By the fall of 1953, the programming change seemed to have had an effect, as one can see in a report drawn up by StRK’s Department for Listener Connection (Hörerverbindung). They also give us a sense of why listeners were drawn to RIAS in the first place. The report presented the results listener letters and a series of listener assemblies held during the fall of 1953. Writers and assembly participants praised the GDR stations for their renewed interest in entertainment programming. The report, interestingly, noted that, “Around 95 percent of listeners express positive opinions about the new programming because it is more relaxed, diverse, and entertaining. A radio correspondent from Rieasa wrote, among other things, ‘Today, no one hears people say, I would like to turn on RIAS so that I can hear beautiful and light music.’”¹²² The report also remarked that audiences had come to trust the GDR stations more. However, in this context “trust” did not refer so much to accurate news but more to seeing the stations as a place to which they could send personal questions about housing affairs and job advancement. Thus, listeners saw

¹²⁰ Quartalsbericht III/1953 der Hauptabteilung Kader des Staatlichen Rundfunkkomitees, quoted by Pietrzynski, “Der 17. Juni 1953 im Rundfunk der DDR,” 129.

¹²¹ Arnold and Classen, “Radio in der DDR,” in *Zwischen Pop und Propaganda*, 16. See as well Dussel, “Die Sowjetisierung des DDR-Rundfunks in den fünfziger Jahren,” 1001.

¹²² *Analyse über die Massenverbindungen des Rundfunks*, October 19, 1953, BAB D 6/231, “Ungefähr 95 Prozent der Hörer äussern sich zustimmend zum neuen Programm, weil es aufgelockerter und abwechslungsreicher ist und mehr Unterhaltung bringt. Ein Funkkorrespondent aus Riesa schrieb u.a.: „Heute hört man niemand mehr sagen, man möchte den RIAS einstellen, um schöne und leichte Musik zu hören.”

the stations as a repository of knowledge and information outside of its news broadcasts. However, there were still complaints about the news programming and the StRK was concerned that individuals were not discussing political attitudes and opinions enough. Listeners complained that “The news was too dry, and there was too little reported on affairs from the rest of the world.”¹²³ Listeners also asked for more light entertainment and lighter music throughout the day. Regarding this, the StRK noted that at the Listener Assemblies, participants did not discuss political and current events broadcasting enough.¹²⁴

A more enduring consequence of June 17 on East German radio was the creation of the X Day narrative. At the same that Gessner, von Schnitzler, and their colleagues were presenting commentaries describing errors committed by East German stations, the same reporters also gave commentaries explaining how the events of June 17 came to pass. The concept of “X Day” was developed through GDR propaganda, yet was grounded in fundamental ideas held by the SED and its security arm, the Ministry for State Security (*Stasi*) concerning the origins of the mass uprising.

RIAS was critical to the legend of “X Day” (“Tag X”). The GDR government believed that RIAS, as an arm of US espionage in Berlin, had both subverted the authority of the East German government and then sent broadcasts on June 16 and 17 throughout the GDR in order to launch and direct the fascist coup plot. A report from the *Stasi* gives insight into how the East German government perceived RIAS’s actions during the summer of 1953. The report declared that western stations claimed to be

¹²³ Ibid., “Die Nachrichten sind zu trocken, es wird zu wenig über Geschehnisse aus aller Welt berichtet.”

¹²⁴ Ibid.

objective in order to deceive listeners.¹²⁵ Furthermore, it fanned the flames of discontent with pessimistic reporting that threatened to disrupt the social order. Stations tried to, “empoison the relationship between the individual and the whole; with unfathomable pessimism is bred distress, despair, and hopelessness, the people are talked into hardship and misery, bondage, depression and exploitation until they lose their moral footing and perspective.”¹²⁶ Thus, the *Stasi* attributed discontent with the GDR to the influence of foreign radio stations. The stations exploited this discontent to encourage East Germans to commit acts of sabotage and resist the government. Western stations also defamed Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet Union.

The report addressed all western stations, not just RIAS, and focused on NWDR Berlin, RIAS, the BBC, Radio Paris, Radio Belgrade, and Südwestfunk. However, RIAS was the station the *Stasi* monitored the most and the station the *Stasi* believed to be the most influential. Of the 99 broadcasts concerning the June 17 uprising that were excerpted and analyzed, nineteen were from NWDR Hamburg, 12 were from the BBC, 1 was from SWF and 67 were from RIAS.

Although the *Stasi* often misinterpreted the goal and content of RIAS broadcasts, it nevertheless showed a keen understanding of its techniques and tactics. The *Stasi* observed, for example, that RIAS was making an effort to cause a rift between the SED and East German workers. This had been an element of RIAS broadcasts since the Berlin blockade. The *Stasi* report noted, “...one uses this opposition to signify a struggle

¹²⁵ *Analyse über die Sendungen des RIAS usw. im Zusammenhang mit d. Putschversuch v. 17.6.1953*, Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatsicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe, 25253, 5-93, 16 (I use the BStU's pagination of the MfS documents).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, “Unter diesen Voraussetzungen wird versucht das Verhältnis vom Einzelnen zur Gesamtheit zu zersetzen; mit abgrundtiefen Pessimismus werden Verzweiflung, Hoffnungslosigkeit und Ausweglosigkeit gezüchtet, den Menschen Not und Elend, Unfreiheit, Unterdrückung und Ausbeutung solange eingeredet, bis sich moralischer Halt und Perspektive verlieren.” 17.

between the working classes and the SED and conclude that the party has neither the classes nor the people behind it and that it will therefore come to an end.”¹²⁷ Similarly, the *Stasi* understood the motives guiding RIAS broadcasts after the New Course was announced. The report noted that, “The June 9, 1953 decisions of the Politbüro of the Central Committee took the wind out of the opponents’ sails.” The sudden reversal of the SED’s policies had left the stations at a loss. However, it was not long before they established a “unified line and system” to assault the New Course.¹²⁸ This “unified line” stressed the success of the Western powers, the success of the opposition in the GDR, and focused on the bankrupt declarations of the SED. RIAS and other western stations were attached to a so-called “Adenauer-Reuter Consortium” a group pressing for German reunification on their terms at the expense of the interests of the GDR.¹²⁹ Citing a RIAS broadcasts of Voice of America and a speech from Jakob Kaiser, the *Stasi* noted western stations were trying to disrupt the GDR through their calls to free prisoners of war in the Soviet Union, institute freedom of the press and freedom of assembly.

An important element in the *Stasi*’s report is how it creates a monolithic picture of western media. Although RIAS is the focus of its attention, NWDR Hamburg and the BBC are nevertheless considered part of the broader unified line, despite the fact that one answered to a board of directors in Hamburg, the other to directors in London, and the last one to the USIA. Furthermore, there is little consideration for distinctions in RIAS’s own broadcasting. VOA broadcasts, produced in Washington DC and exported to USIA

¹²⁷ Ibid., “Zugleich benutzt man sich diesen Widerstand als Kampf zwischen Arbeiterschaf und SED zu bezeichnen und daraus zu schlußfolgern, daß die Partei weder die Klasse noch das Volk hinter sich hat und daß es demzufolge mit ihr zu Ende geht.” 21.

¹²⁸ Ibid., “...eine einheitliche Linie und Systematik feststellen....” 58.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 60.

stations, were made independently of RIAS's own programs.¹³⁰ Secondly, speeches made by West German officials were considered just another element of RIAS's organized campaign against the GDR. The notion, for example, that Jakob Kaiser would be given free reign to say what he wished and that his speech did not necessarily reflect the views of RIAS and its staff, was not considered.

Naturally, the *Stasi* devoted considerable attention to western broadcasts sent on June 16 and 17. On the broadcasts of RIAS, NWDR Hamburg, and the BBC, the report noted, "All following news broadcasts afforded the provocation for war top priority and reported on them in great detail."¹³¹ The stations encouraged listeners to participate in the demonstrations. The fiery speeches of the war provocateurs had been relayed through the airwaves by the various radio stations. All of this was done at the orders of the imperialist forces, such as the "Adenauer Clique" and other "Bonn functionaries" who were directing and organizing both the broadcasts and the demonstrations. The word "strikers" was placed in quotation marks throughout to stress the belief that the strikes were in fact cover for fascist activities. The Bonn regime hoped, the *Stasi* report indicated, that the demonstrations would succeed in destroying the GDR.

While a number of radio stations were cited throughout the report, RIAS was the principle provocateur. Schütz's June 16 commentary was heavily quoted to provide readers with a sense of RIAS's argumentation and approach to the demonstrations. However, the quote is inaccurate, presenting the correct language, but conflating two different commentaries and placing them out of order. The first half of the quotation presents a near verbatim passage from Schütz's commentary. However, the second half

¹³⁰ US High Commissioner for Germany, *RIAS: Radio in the American Sector*, (Undated [1953]), 45.

¹³¹ Analyse über die Sendungen des RIAS, 67. "Alle darauffolgenden Nachrichten berichteten sehr ausführlich und an erster Stelle über die Kriegsprovokationen."

is a quotation of a description of the workers' delegations' visit to the RIAS station house that same evening. There is no indication that these two excerpts were broadcast in the way the *Stasi* presented them. The latter half of the quotation was, according to RIAS records, broadcast *before* Schütz's commentary, and was in fact part of a commentary sent to introduce the Schütz broadcast. Both were sent during the same program.¹³² The actual language of the broadcasts was accurate. However, the report fails to distinguish between different speakers and mixes up the order of paragraphs. The *Stasi* were not always accurate in their transcriptions.

The *Stasi* report presented a monolithic depiction of western radio stations. RIAS, NWDR, and the BBC were all part of the same conspiracy. All took their orders from a broad imperialist clique. With the exception of references to Adenauer and the West German government, the members of this clique are rarely described in detail. There is nothing in the report concerning the individuals working for the stations either. For the most part, the radio stations are the faceless tools of pro-fascist war provocateurs. The quotations from various broadcasts are sometimes wrongly transcribed and do not provide any indication of different viewpoints, different speakers, or different programs. The broadcasts are presented as evidence of a unified line of argumentation presented at all the western radio stations.

Within weeks after the June 17 uprising, East German radio stations translated the *Stasi*'s interpretation of the events through their broadcasts. The daily commentary on July 2, 1953 discussed how terrorist fascist organizations armed and funded by the United

¹³² The quote is on page 75 of *Analyse über die Sendungen des RIAS*. The RIAS report presents both broadcasts in RIAS Berlin, *Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, 4-6.

States had launched covert missions into East Germany to help incite a revolt.¹³³

Gessner's daily commentary for July 6 implicated West German banking concerns, claiming that increased telephone conversations between various corporations was evidence of a preconceived plot.¹³⁴

The idea of "X Day" would be a prominent element of East German radio during programming broadcast to mark the anniversary of the events as well. In this sense, radio participated in a general project undertaken by the GDR to develop and disseminate the legend of "X Day." In 1954, East German radio's Programs I and II both featured reports and commentaries on the show trials held to convict those who were supposedly involved in organizing and staging the attempted coup. A documentary-commentary from June 11, 1954 illustrates the various elements of the "X Day" narrative. The focus of the broadcast was defendant, Wolfgang Silgradt. Born in 1905, Silgradt worked as a journalist in Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Vienna before serving in the armed forces and being incarcerated in an American POW camp. Returning to Leipzig in 1945, he moved out of the GDR in 1950 because of his contacts with the CDU's Ostbüro and the threat of being arrested by the *Stasi*. On February 20, 1954 the *Stasi* kidnapped him after he entered the Eastern Sector of Berlin. Along with three others, he was subsequently put on trial for participating in the June 17 uprising.¹³⁵ The commentary depicted Silgradt as a fascist agent and a capitalist. He had earned his money "in the most discriminating

¹³³ Sendemanuskripte, Tageskommentar, July 2, 1953, E. Glückauf, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 095-00-01/0002, T Sig. 0144.

¹³⁴ Sendemanuskripte, Kommentar des Tages, July 6, 1953, Herbert Hessner, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 095-00-01/0002 T Sig. 0145.

¹³⁵ Markus Gloe, *Planung für die Wiedervereinigung: Die Forschungsbeirat für Fragen der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands, 1952-1975*, (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 230.

style and manner,” and had worked as an advisor to German cartels.¹³⁶ He had worked as a member of the economics administration in fascist occupied Poland during the war. A former member of the Advisory Board for Questions on German Reunification (Forschungsbeirat für Fragen der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands), he had used his influence with that organization to continue the acts of “plundering” he had perpetrated in Poland.¹³⁷ In East Germany, he was an opponent of the anti-fascist Bloc Politics and worked as a spy for the CDU’s Ostbüro. Upon his departure from the GDR, he continued to work as a spy and became involved with the Federal Ministry for All German Affairs. At the same time, the program noted, “Then, he initiated relations with an institution, which calls itself with rare brazenness as a radio station and as RIAS sends everything objectionable to the ear.”¹³⁸ Through his connections with RIAS, Silgradt became involved with “Stein,” an American agent. Although the broadcast does not specify, the “Stein” referred to here was Lisa Stein, a worker for RIAS’s Ostbüro responsible for interviewing visitors to the station from the Eastern Zone. Stein would figure prominently in subsequent *Stasi* reports on RIAS and was frequently a target of anti-RIAS activities (see next chapter).

Thus, in the years before the June 17 uprising, Silgradt had developed into the type of individual who would be willing and eager to participate in a pro-fascist attempted coup. The commentator presented the day in a dramatic fashion. The perpetrators sought, by using poison gas and terror, to make “the fortress ripe to be

¹³⁶ Sendemanuskripte, “Prozeß gegen Dr. Silgradt und andere,” June 11, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 095-00-18/0001 T Sig 0001.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., “Dann bahnte er Beziehungen zu einer Institution an, die sich mit seltener Unverschämtheit als Rundfunk bezeichnet und als Rias jedem *unangenehm im Ohr erlingt*.” The italicized selection is written in pencil. The original, typed section reads: “hinreichend bekannt ist.”

stormed.” “The day was X Day, the fortress was the German Democratic Republic.”¹³⁹

However, the day passed and the GDR survived due to the steadfastness of the Soviet army and the commitment of the true workers and farmers dedicated to the institutions of the GDR.

A broadcast sent three days later further developed these themes. The broadcast, another commentary by Mendelsohn, was designed to provide a final report on the Silgradt trial. In this particular commentary, the speaker implicated RIAS as the catalyst for the uprising. “Let’s go back one year to June 17, 1953. One day before, the call to start the coup was sent over RIAS and the call for a general strike was broadcast by Ernst Scharnowski, the West Berlin Chairman of the Deutschen Gewerkschaftbund.”¹⁴⁰ The broadcast created the picture of a vast network of spies, assembled in West Germany and deployed across the GDR with the intent of destroying the East German state. Members of this network included but were not limited to the CDU, FDP, SPD, the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs, the DGB, and RIAS. Importantly, this network was planning a second coup attempt. As the commentator concluded:

And for this new X Day, which is now being planned and arranged, the agents are now getting ready and the reports are being compiled, from Herr Jöhren, from the Eastern Office of the CDU, from Herr Götze, from the League of Human Rights, from Herr Nase, the leader of the Eastern Office of the FDP, from Herr Haas, from the Eastern Office of the SPD, from Herr Deiters, a leading representative of the Association of Political Eastern Refugees, from Frau Stein and her crony Kirnstadt at RIAS, from Rainer Hildebrandt, who has now accepted the Committee “17. Juni,” from Professor Kramer, Professor Thalheim, Dr,

¹³⁹ Ibid., “Der Tag war der Tag X, die Festung die Deutsche Demokratische Republik.”

¹⁴⁰ Sendemanuskript, “Prozess Oberstes Gericht, Silgradt und andere,” June 14, 1954, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B 095-00-18/0002 T Sig. 0002.

Seume, Professor Meinberg, Dr. Franz Rupp, Herbert Wehner, Dr. Ing. Spenrat und Frederick-Karl von Zitzewitz-Nuttrin. Their names are known, as are their deeds. Their judges belong to our generation. There is a name, which has not yet been named in this long sequence, yet would still be named. Its carrier: a weazly, little old man who wobbled to West Berlin from the ash-heap of history to also be present: Kerensky.¹⁴¹

The list included nearly every non-GDR official and personality and organization that was responsible for issues concerning East Germany. Even Kerensky, living in the United States and politically powerless since 1917, was nevertheless believed to be part of this large conspiracy aimed at destroying East Germany.

During subsequent anniversaries, East German radio stations made sure to present a broadcast further reinforcing and develop the X Day narrative. On June 16, 1955 both Programs I and II presented a broadcast condemning the United States for arming saboteurs and agents and sending them into the GDR to disrupt the state. With the help of Ernst Reuter and his successor Otto Suhr, the US had erected a spy network in West Berlin designed to sabotage the GDR. RIAS continued to broadcast lies and aspersions. Berlin was still a “frontstadt” and would remain so until West Berliners exposed the “nest of agents” in their midst.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Ibid. “Und für diesen neuen Tag X wird jetzt geplant und projiziert, werden jetzt die Agenten ausgeschickt und die Berichte zusammengestellt, von Herrn Jähren, vom Ostbüro der CDU, von Herrn Götze, von der Liga für Menschenrechte, von Herrn Nase, dem Leiter des Ostbüros der FDP, von Herrn Haas, vom Ostbüro der SPD, von Herrn Deiters, einem leitenden Angestellten der Vereinigung politischer Ostflüchtlinge, von Frau Stein und ihrem Kumpanen Kirnstädt im „Rias“, von Rainer Hildebrandt, der sich jetzt des Komitees „17. Juni“ angenommen hat, von Prof. Kramer, Prof. Thalheim, Dr. Seume, Prof. Meinberg, Dr. Franz Rupp, Herbert Wehner, Dr. Ing. Spenrat, und Friedrich-Karl von Zitzewitz-Muttrin. Ihre Namen sind bekannt, ihre Taten des gleichen, ihrer Richter gehören unserer Generation an. Ein Name, der in dieser langen Reihe noch nicht erwähnt wurde, sei noch erwähnt. Sein Träger, ein altes verhutztes Männlein, der vom Müllplatz der Geschichte nach Westberlin gewackelt kam, um auch mit dabei zu sein: Kerenski.”

¹⁴² Sendemanuskript, Kommentar des Tages, June 16, 1955, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B095-00-01/0009 T Sig. 0100.

That same day, Deutschlandsender, the East German station designed specifically for West German broadcasts, reviewed the chronology of events that led to X Day. The espionage action was taken in reaction to the announcement of the New Course. “In Korea, the cease fire was being signed. A four-power conference emerged on the horizon. The government of the German Democratic Republic announced on June 9 and 11 the New Course. Everywhere in the world as well as in Germany, the Cold War fever declined and a relaxation of tensions began. The course of rearmament actions on the stock exchanged was being turned back. New tensions and insecurity needed to come about in order to create a war psychosis.”¹⁴³ Thus, threatened by the New Course, the West rapidly set about destabilizing the GDR. German concerns sent Adenauer their demands and orders. The West German espionage organization, the Gehlen group, created a network of spies to send into East Germany. “And then began that “spontaneous peoples’ uprising,” managed over the airwaves by RIAS, in which paid male prostitutes (“Achtgroschenjungen”) burned red flags, demolished union buildings, dynamited consumer emporia, in which disguised fascists murdered work functionaries, in which such a beast as the former commanders of the Dorn Concentration Camp in Halle raged.”¹⁴⁴ The “coup” once again failed, due to the solidarity of the workers and their Soviet allies.

Once again, East German radio created the image of a large, highly coordinated espionage action designed to undermine the GDR. In this case, the commentator argued

¹⁴³ Ibid., “In Korea war der Waffenstillstand unterzeichnet worden. Am politischen Horizont zeichnete sich eine Viermächtekonferenz ab. Die Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik verkündete am 9. und 11. Juni den neuen Kurs. Allenthalben in der Welt um auch in Deutschland ließ das Fieber des kalten Krieges nach, begann eine Welle der Entspannung. Die Kurse der Rüstungsaktionen an den Börsen ihnen rapide zurück. Es mußte etwas geschehen, um neue Spannungen, Unsicherheit, eine erneute Kriegspsychose zu schaffen.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., “Und dann startete—über die Ätherwellen des RIAS gelenkt—jener „spontane Volksaufstand,“ in-dem gedungene Achtgroschenjungen rote Fahnen verbrannten, Gewerkschaftshäuser demolierten, Konsumläden in die Luft sprengten, in dem bisher getarnte Faschistischen Arbeiterfunktionäre ermordeten, indem eine solche Bestie wie die ehemalige KZ-Kommandeure Dorn in Halle wütete.”

that the action was launched to insure that the Cold War tensions were not relaxed. The New Course was now hailed as evidence that East Germany and the Soviet Union sought a rapprochement with the west. June 17 was seen as evidence that the west, rather than seek a relaxation of hostility, deliberately sought to increase the Cold War rivalry for the sake of the armaments industry in the US.

The primary element of the “X Day” narrative was a vast profascist conspiracy. All enemies of the GDR, from real critics to perceived threats, were placed within its broad umbrella. Perhaps the most prominent idea that emerges is the overall siege mentality that the “X-Day” narrative creates. The GDR is a state under threat. West Berlin is depicted like a knife to East Germany’s throat, with RIAS and other organizations free to send agents into East Berlin to stage acts of sabotage and try and destroy the GDR. Also critical is the belief that another “X-Day” is being planned. Thus, East Germany was depicted as being infiltrated and surrounded by enemies.

Conclusion: Political Mythmaking and the June 17, 1953 Uprising

Both RIAS and East German radio helped create explanatory narratives of the June 17 uprising. At both, this process began almost immediately after the events. At RIAS, in fact, the process took place as the events unfolded.

The RIAS narrative is best represented by the commentaries presented by Eberhard Schütz, Egon Bahr, and *Berlin spricht zur Zone*. Over the course of three days, RIAS helped transform a protest against work quotas into a popular plea for the

reunification of Germany. An analysis of these broadcasts, especially by Schütz and Bahr, reveals a large number of declarations and contentions to this effect as both RIAS reporters tried to explain the meaning of the uprising. Frequently, both emphasized that the demonstrations were not just about the work quotas, but also about something bigger and more significant. Schütz's commentary stressed the democratic elements of the demonstrations, and focused on the demands for free elections, amnesty for strike participants, and the resignation of the Ulbricht government. Bahr went further, and linked democratic reforms with German unification. The June 17 uprising was a declaration for reunification. The original impetus for the demonstrations, the work quotas, fell into the background.

Strikes and demonstrations became a popular uprising. RIAS did not necessarily cause this transformation. The June 16 demonstrations and the workers' delegation all spoke about the need for democratic reforms and significant changes in the East German state. However, a study of RIAS's broadcasts between June 16 and 18 tells us a great deal about how a medium of the mass media can both develop and disseminate political narratives. By June 18, RIAS's morning broadcasts had already constructed a narrative framework. The June 18th *Werktag der Zone* stressed this by describing how the same sequence of events occurred in multiple cities and towns throughout the GDR. The event began with workers' demands for a reduced quota and strikes. The GDR's inactivity led to a radicalization of demands for democracy and German unification coupled with a march upon government buildings. Then, just as true fundamental change seemed possible, Soviet tanks entered the city to put down the demonstrations. This sequence of

events, the broadcast declared, was repeated throughout the GDR in a similar manner, with little variation.

East German radio also constructed narrative frameworks to describe June 17. However, the confusion and political rivalries afflicting the GDR government meant that the narrative was less consistent, especially during the weeks immediately after the uprising. Whereas RIAS developed an explanatory framework for the uprising before it even began, East German radio produced two often-conflicting explanations. The first focused on the mistakes made by both the SED and the radio stations. Although Herbert Gessner made a point on July 2 to reinforce the idea that the uprising had been a minority action, he nevertheless focused on radio's failure to understand the true needs and interests of the East German workers. Thus, Gessner attributed the revolt to a failure on the part of the SED. However, at the same time, reporters developed the idea of X-Day, and the belief that June 17 was a massive conspiracy launched by western agents to prevent a relaxation of Cold War tensions and attempt to bring down the GDR. These narratives existed side by side until the end of July, when the SED ordered a stop to broadcasts about mistakes and failures. This change reflected the resolution of the political rivalries afflicting the SED leadership between Ulbricht on the one side and Zaisser and Herrnsdorf on the other. In July, Ulbricht, whose own power and authority were strengthened, expelled the latter two from the party. Thus, the hard-line Stalinist policies that had governed the SED since 1949 returned. Radio reflected the reestablishment of the status quo.

Chapter Five: The East German Campaign Against RIAS.

In 1956, the deputy head of the East German State Radio Committee, Gerhard Eisler, received a letter from a lower level SED functionary. The majority of the letter praised the GDR's radio programming. In closing, however, its author noted a point of concern. "I have pointed out that many people in our Republic listen to RIAS and SFB alongside democratic Radio, and are of the opinion that the truth lies in the middle. In any case, to be sure, many listen to RIAS and SFB!"¹ GDR citizens, the letter confirmed, still listened to the radio stations of East Germany, Berliner Rundfunk included. The problem was that they chose to listen to other broadcasters as well.

An important challenge facing the GDR during the 1950s was not just that their radio stations needed to engage and confront the broadcasts being sent by RIAS Berlin and other western broadcasters. It was also that residents of the GDR chose to listen to West German stations as well as East German stations. As a rival source for news and information for the GDR's citizens, RIAS Berlin represented a critical challenge to the SED's need for a monopoly on truth and interpretation. Furthermore, many amongst the SED and the GDR's Ministry for State Security, or *Stasi*, believed that the American funded station was a magnet for spies and a nerve center for espionage operations in East Germany. For both these reasons, the German Democratic Republic undertook an aggressive campaign using radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, pamphlets, *Stasi*

¹ Letter from Heinz Danke to Gerhart Eisler, November 27, 1956, BAB, Abteilung Agitation, SAPMO DY 30/ IV2/ 9.02/84. "Ich habe festgestellt, daß viele Menschen unserer Republik die Praxis üben, Rias und SFB, aber auch den demokratischen Rundfunk hören, und der Meinung sind, die Wahrheit liege in der Mitte. Fest steht jedenfalls, daß viele Rias oder SFB hören!"

infiltration, arrests, show trials, and broadcast jamming to prevent individuals from listening to West German broadcasts, with particular attention paid to RIAS. An exploration of the GDR's anti-RIAS campaign is critical to understanding how RIAS and other stations played a role in shaping German political culture. Examining the campaign also allows one to explore important elements of East German political culture during the 1950s. The anti-RIAS campaign was a very visible expression of the SED's concerns about its authority and legitimacy. For the GDR, RIAS was a symbol of the war mongering policies of the imperialist United States and its illegitimate and fascist West German puppet state. A consistent narrative pervaded almost all of the anti-RIAS pamphlets and newspaper stories produced by the GDR. RIAS was almost always depicted as a militaristic, imperialist organ aimed at keeping Germany divided and provoking a war with the Soviet Union. However, the GDR went beyond simply attacking the station. RIAS listeners were also targeted, and were invariably cast as a minority of unpatriotic, treasonous, warmongers who were easily duped by the lies of the United States. Listening to RIAS and visiting the station were acts of treason. At the same time, allowing people to listen to RIAS was a threat to the very existence of the GDR. Years before the SED physically sealed the GDR border in 1961, the East German government had already sealed its airwaves from outside influences by discouraging listening to foreign broadcasts and using transmission jamming to make such an act impossible.

Examining the GDR's anti-RIAS campaign also allows us to examine the reception of RIAS's broadcasts. The virulence of the GDR's campaign against the station illustrates that a not insignificant segment of the East German population listened

to the station. This was corroborated by polls and surveys assembled by the United States Information Agency, the US Embassy to West Germany, and West German stations such as NWDR. Throughout these polls, RIAS was consistently named the most popular source for news and information by those East Germans surveyed. Thus, US, West German, and East German authorities were in agreement that RIAS was an immensely popular news source for GDR citizens. At the same time, the GDR's anti-RIAS campaign allows us to examine how the SED and East German government received and understood RIAS's broadcasts. Thus, an analysis of the GDR's anti-RIAS operations, ranging from propaganda to espionage, is another means of exploring the reception of dissemination of RIAS's broadcasts.²

This chapter explores the anti-RIAS campaign as a multifaceted project that utilized a variety of media and tactics. I begin by examining anti-RIAS media produced by the GDR throughout the 1950s. I will then consider state directed harassment, attempts at infiltration, and show trials used against the station and finally consider the most effective anti-RIAS tool, frequency jamming. I will conclude with a consideration of the broader consequences of the anti-RIAS campaign for the station's position in German society.

Print Media and Radio

² Grimm ed. *Literatur und Leser*, Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), and Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," *History and Theory* 32 (1993): 248-272. See as well Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*.

In January 1952, the SED Politbüro resolved to wage an aggressive campaign aimed at curtailing “the listening to enemy radio.”³ The campaign focused on RIAS and the West German station Northwest German Radio. In the words of the Politbüro, “These enemy radio stations serve the American and English occupying powers, are war mongers, propagate aspersions and lies against our Republic with the purpose of disrupting the peaceful construct, and organize sabotage and diversions.”⁴ The SED further declared that, “Those who listen to RIAS or NWDR open their ears to those who wish to incite war, open their homes to our peoples’ worst enemies and supports the enemies of peace and our system.”⁵ Since the stations were the mouthpieces of American and English imperialists, individuals who listened to either station helped the imperialists’ propaganda efforts and aided their war mongering. Consequently, the SED declared that it needed to wage a, “campaign of ideological enlightenment” against both the station and those who listened to them, using newspapers, broadcasts, and other forms of mass pressure.⁶

If radio was to be a primary means for developing and shaping a socialist mentality within the masses of the GDR, then it was necessary for the GDR to have a monopoly on broadcasting. However, as long as RIAS existed, the SED would never be able to hold a monopoly on all broadcasting within East Germany. Even if only a small minority listened to the station, its ability to broadcast into the GDR represented a clear and present danger to the viability of the GDR. Thus, the challenge was only

³ Protokolle des Politbüro des Zentralkomitees SED, no. 87, January 15, 1952, Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO) DY 30/ IV2/2/ 187.

⁴ Anlage 4 zum Protokoll no. 87 vom Januar 15, 1952, BAB, Protokolle des Politbüro des Zentralkomitees SED, SAPMO DY 30/ IV2/2/ 187. “Diese Rundfunkstationen stehen im Dienste der amerikanischen und englischen Besatzungsmächte, hetzen zum Kriege, verbreiten Verleumdungen und Lügen gegen unsere Republik mit dem Ziele, den friedlichen Aufbau zu stören und Sabotage und Diversionen zu organisieren.”

⁵ Ibid., “Wer RIAS oder NWDR hört, leiht den Kriegsbrandstiftern sein Ohr, öffnet seine Wohnung den schlimmsten Gegnern unseres Volkes und unterstützt die Feinde des Friedens und unseres Aufbaus.

⁶ Ibid. “....eine ideologische Aufklärungskampagne....”

compounded by the fact that the station was popular amongst East Germans. RIAS enjoyed consistent popularity amongst East German listeners, as shown by surveys taken by various services attached to the United States Information Agency and the US Department of State throughout the 1950s.

The USIA and State Department frequently assembled polls in order to determine the effectiveness of US psychological warfare operations behind the Iron Curtain. Berlin's open border gave US officials the opportunity to grant East German individuals a relatively free forum with which to express their opinions about issues related to broadcasting. Usually employing the services of the Deutsche Institut für Volksumfragen (DIVO), the US embassy in Bonn took advantage of events where traffic between the two sectors was heavy (such as Berlin's annual Green Week Festival) to assemble data on listener preference and reception problems.

Before we examine the results of these polls, it is worth examining the questions and sample sizes of these surveys. One typical poll was assembled in the fall of 1955 from individuals attending the Berlin Trade Fair. The poll was assembled by the Office of Public Affairs at the US Embassy in Bonn. Critically, the poll acknowledged that the picture created by the poll could not necessarily be considered an unbiased picture of listening habits in the GDR. At the outset, the survey's writers acknowledged the shortcomings of the poll sample. "As readers of this report realize, a true area probability sample of East Zone Germans cannot be drawn; and even, in the absence of sufficient

reliable statistics concerning the population itself, a quota sample faces obvious shortcomings.”⁷

Thus, the poll focused on assembling a sample that was as representative of the East German population as possible. In defending the poll results, the writers noted, “They most certainly are, on the other hand, of more worth than the reactions and comments of scattered individuals who may volunteer disjointed scraps and information from East Germany.”⁸ Of the 399 individuals questioned for the survey, 240 were men and 159 were women. 186 were between 18 and 34 years of age, 195 between 35 and 64 and 18 over 65.⁹ In terms of employment background, no one group stood out. The largest group polled were white-collar workers, with 72 individuals questioned. 73 were classified as housewives, 69 as skilled laborers, 46 as students, 43 as professionals, 34 as businessmen, 29 as semi-skilled laborers, 18 as unemployed or retired, and 15 as farmers. The low number of polled individuals classified as “farmers” attests to the fact that most visitors were from urban environments: 143 of the surveyed individuals were from a city with over 100,000 inhabitants. 93 came from cities with populations between 5,000 and 24,999 and 73 came from cities with between 25,000 and 99,999 inhabitants. Thus, 77% of those surveyed came from towns with at least 5,000 inhabitants, and over half (54%) came from areas where the population was at least 25,000. Interestingly, a majority traveled a considerable distance to reach Berlin. Most resided in Saxony or Saxony-Anhalt, with 81% living at least 100 kilometers away from the East German capital.

⁷ Research Staff, Office of Public Affairs American Embassy, “Some East Zone Radio Listening Habits-as Revealed by Visitors to the Berlin Trade Fair,” September 24-October 5, 1955, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Research Reports on German Public Opinion,” Entry 1005, 250/67/04/02-04, Box 7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. The age breakdowns were 18-24, 25-34, 34-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65 and over.

Thus, the individuals answering these surveys were not making a casual, unplanned visit, but most likely an excursion planned in advance.

The survey questions ranged from broad to specific, and did not necessarily lead individuals to respond favorably to RIAS. Initially, they were asked, “Which radio station do you tune in most?” This was followed by “Which of these stations do you like best?” Following this, individuals were then asked questions specifically about the stations they selected as their favorite. RIAS listeners were initially asked questions about listening habits. Questions included, “Approximately how often do you listen to RIAS?” “At what time of day do you usually listen to RIAS?”, “And over which wavelength do you tune in?”

This was followed by “How is the reception of RIAS lately, let’s say, during the past six months, it is improved, worsened or is it unchanged?”¹⁰ This question was then followed by what was probably the most leading one in the survey, “How effective is RIAS, in your opinion, in refuting Eastern propaganda: Very effective, fairly effective, only slightly effective or not effective at all?” While in this case 73% answered “Very/fairly effective,” one needs to ask how individuals could accurately answer this question. First, to know if RIAS was effectively refuting East German propaganda, one had to know what claims and assertions made by the GDR were in fact propaganda. Second, one had to trust that RIAS was correct when it refuted the official claims of the GDR media claims. Due to the difficulty of obtaining accurate information in East Germany, it is difficult to consider the answers to this question to be an accurate assessment. Nevertheless, the fact that so many stated that RIAS was effective in this

¹⁰ Ibid., 20-24.

area indicates that the majority likely turned to the station because they believed it refuted GDR propaganda.

The results for this particular poll ranked RIAS as the second most popular broadcaster in East Germany. 58% stated they tuned into it the most. Amongst West German stations, NWDR came first, with 62%. 34% selected SFB and 22% tuned into the BBC. The majority (65%) tuned into the GDR's broadcasters the most. However, it is critical to note that the station an individual tuned into the most was not necessarily their favorite station or the one they believed to be the most accurate or credible. More often it was the radio station with the best reception. Thus, the researchers made sure to follow the question about which station individuals tuned into the most with the question: "Which of these stations do you like best?" In this case, no station held a clear majority, with 33% selecting NWDR and 20% selecting RIAS. 19% selected SFB, with 3% selecting the BBC. Just 8% selected the GDR's broadcasters as their *preferred* station. Interestingly, the ratio did not remain the same across gender or professional lines. For example, while individuals between 18 and 54 preferred NWDR, individuals over 55 preferred RIAS. RIAS was also more popular than NWDR amongst housewives.¹¹

The preceding survey was just one of a number of similar surveys assembled by the DIVO under contract with the US embassy. Importantly, the researchers and US officials themselves never claimed that these were definitive or representative. They acknowledged their drawbacks, but also noted that, due to the difficulty of obtaining listener information from the GDR, they nevertheless contained valuable information that helped RIAS to improve both its broadcasts and choice of frequency and transmitters.

¹¹ Ibid., 31.

Not all of the polls produced the same result, and a number of factors played a role in listener answers. Consistently, however, RIAS ranked first or second amongst those polled when asked to indicate their preferred source of information. A February 1953 survey taken by the United States Information Service's International Evaluation Staff noted, for example, that, "[RIAS's] news and political programs are the key attractions among all segments of the audience."¹² Although other stations could compete with RIAS's entertainment and artistic programming, the US sponsored broadcaster was the preferred source for news and commentary. Four years later, a survey of East German visitor interviews assembled in February of 1957 by the Frankfurt based media research group, the Deutsche Institut für Volksumfragen (DIVO), under the auspices of the US Embassy in Bonn, reiterated the same judgment. The survey noted that, "RIAS's programs are rated very highly and judging by the results of this study, it can be clearly stated that RIAS has particularly gained the confidence of its East Zone audience for its news services."¹³ Again, news broadcasts and commentaries were the most popular RIAS programs and RIAS was the station of choice for listeners wishing to hear accurate information about major events (in this particular case the Suez and Hungarian Crises were cited).¹⁴ Another DIVO survey of 600 East German visitors to West Berlin taken in the fall of 1958 confirmed this view, but also noted that RIAS was the most popular source of information about conditions in the GDR itself in comparison

¹² IEV, *Country Report on Radio: East Germany*, February 1953.

¹³ Research Staff, Office of Public Affairs, American Embassy, *East Zone Opinion of RIAS Programming*, Report no. A-9, Series no. 3, March 6, 1957, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Office of Research, Field Research Reports 1953-1978, Entry 1007B, 250/67/07/01-03, Box 35.

¹⁴ Ibid.

to both East German and other West German broadcasters.¹⁵ The observation was corroborated in another survey made in March 1960 in which the report's author stated, "As a source of information on domestic as well as foreign affairs, RIAS also commands the confidence of the majority of all East German listeners and particularly of the RIAS audience."¹⁶ The report also noted that, with the exception of 1957, (for reasons discussed below), RIAS audience remained above 50% of the inhabitants of East Germany, having reached 76% in 1960. Even in the fall of 1957, when jamming had severely cut RIAS's audience numbers, it remained the most trusted news source amongst Berlin's stations, and was still preferred to any of the East German broadcasters as a means of obtaining information.¹⁷

Even when we account for different polling samples and the political motivations of East German individuals visiting West Berlin, the USIS and DIVO polls consistently produced the same result over the course of 10 years. The virulence of the GDR's anti-RIAS campaign was seen as further corroboration for the station's popularity in East Germany. Throughout the 1950s RIAS was consistently one of the most popular radio stations in East Germany and, with a few exceptions, was consistently more popular than any of the East German stations. Even in the years when there was a drop off in listeners, audiences went to other West German stations before they turned to East German broadcasters. Consequently, RIAS was a perennially popular rival as a source for news

¹⁵ Research Staff, Office of Public Affairs, American Embassy, *Station Popularity and Reception Conditions within East Germany*, Report No. A-22 Series No. 3 November 17, 1958, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Research Reports on German Public Opinion, Entry 1005, 250/67/04/02-04, Box 11.

¹⁶ Deutsche Institut für Volksumfragen (DIVO), *East Zone Radio Listening and TV Viewing Habits*, March 1960, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Office of Research, Research Reports 1953-1986, Entry 1013A, 250/67/08/05-07, Box 35.

¹⁷ Research Staff, Office of Public Affairs, American Embassy, *Radio Listening in the GDR*, Report No. A-18, Series no. 3, December 19, 1957, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Office of Research, Field Research Reports 1953-1978, Entry 1007B, 250/67/07/01-03, Box 35.

and information in foreign and domestic affairs and a constant source of competition for the GDR's stations.

Throughout the 1950s, the GDR published brochures, pamphlets, and newspaper stories aimed at discouraging people from listening to RIAS. A consistent array of themes shaped their general arguments. First, RIAS, the material usually characterized RIAS as a foreign interloper funded by American warmongers intent on launching World War III. Second, the print media and broadcasts depicted the station as a nerve center for anti-GDR sabotage and espionage operations. Finally, the print media portrayed RIAS's listeners as vagrants, criminals, and gullible individuals who were easily duped by the station's promise of wealth in West Germany. For the GDR propaganda campaign, RIAS was not just a radio station. Nor was it merely an irritant or a minor problem. RIAS was an espionage center in the middle of democratic Germany that utilized its radio transmissions to send coded messages to its sleeper agents through the GDR. Thus listening to RIAS was not just unpatriotic or even un-German. It was treasonous.

A pamphlet from 1957 entitled *Ein Mann kam nach Berlin* illustrates all of these themes. The pamphlet was produced to mark the appointment of Laurence Dalcher as the new Director of RIAS. The cover features the West Berlin Funkturm at Masurenallee with a large, foreboding figure in the foreground.¹⁸ Drawn in silhouette, the man wears a bulky trench coat and hat and is clearly meant to evoke dread and fear. The pamphlet describes Dalcher's background, noting he worked for the US Information Services in Vienna where, the pamphlet contends, he directed the 1956 Hungarian uprising. The pamphlet's anonymous author declares:

¹⁸ *Ein Mann kam nach Berlin*, Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM), Propagandschrift des ZK der SED gegen den RIAS, amerikanische Agenten und die NATO, DG 90/2657 (MfDG), Rep VII/DDR3/F 14/M 47 (10).

Mr. Dalcher organized the construction of American secret transmitters in Hungary. He described these as “Hungarian Freedom Transmitters.” Staggered by panic, thousands fell victim to their lies as they fled their homeland in confusion. Inflamed by Mr. Dalcher’s infamous pogrom baiting, those behind the attempted coup in Hungary murdered in a bestial manner women and children, proletarian functionaries and other Hungarian citizens who were loyal to the order of the Peoples’ Democracy.¹⁹

Alongside the lines cited above is a graphic photograph, ostensibly taken during the Hungarian Uprising, of a body hung by its legs and being stripped bare by a mob. The implication is clear: Dalcher used radio stations to instigate a reactionary coup in Hungary that led to mob violence and murder. Dalcher even instigated “pogroms,” language likely meant to evoke the Nazi past. And, importantly for the pamphlet’s intended audience, Dalcher was now taking control of RIAS. If Dalcher tried to overthrow the government of Hungary, there was every reason to believe he would try and do the same in, “democratic Germany.”

However, Dalcher and RIAS were but one participant in a much larger and more elaborate conspiracy arrayed against the GDR. RIAS was, in fact, “the basic receptacle and information center for the American multimillionaires’ Fifth Column aimed against the German Democratic Republic.”²⁰ Like all other American secret organizations, RIAS utilized criminals and adventurers to carry out their goals. RIAS sought to bring the same

¹⁹ Ibid. “Mr. Dalcher organisierte den Aufbau amerikanischer Geheimsender und Funkzentralen in Ungarn, die er als “ungarische Freiheitssender” deklarierte. Ihren Lügen fielen Tausende Menschen zum Opfer die—in Panik versetzt—kopflös ihre Heimat verließen. Von Mr. Dalcher infamer Pogromhetze aufgeitscht, mordeten die Putschisten in Ungarn in bestialischer Weise Frauen und Kinder, Arbeitsfunktionäre und andere ungarische Staatsbürger, die true zur volksdemonstrasichen Ordnung standen.”

²⁰ Ibid. “Und RIAS—das ist ein Sammelbecken und eine Informationszentrale der 5. Kolonne der amerikanische Multimillionäre gegen die Deutsche Demokratische Republik.”

things to East Germany that Radio Free Europe brought to Hungary: “Unrest! Provocation! Death!”²¹ On a two-page spread, the “organizers” of the RIAS plots are laid out and presented with photographs accompanied by short glosses. They include the three Dulles siblings: US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, whose state department funded RIAS, CIA Director Allan Dulles, in command of the US fifth column abroad, and US Berlin representative Eleanor Dulles. On Eleanor’s relation with RIAS, the author writes, “There is no long range action carried out by this agent center that she herself has not contrived”²² Next is Dulles’ deputy at the State Department, Hebert Hoover Jr., W.B: Jackson, Chief of the Institute for Psychological Warfare, and Lucius Clay, former commander of the US Zone of Occupied Germany and, in the words of the pamphlet, the man famous for dividing Germany as well as the leader of the Committee Free Europe.

Yet, as powerful and influential as these individuals were, they were still under the control of the “men behind the scenes,” (“Die Hintermänner”): the Ford and Rockefeller families. The pamphlet declared, “The true chiefs of RIAS are the business administrators of the USA. They are also the financiers of RIAS.”²³ Their means for achieving this control were anti-Soviet organizations such as the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller foundations. Next to the description of these “men behind the scenes” is a picture of New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller situated beneath a quotation in which he conveys to President Eisenhower the need for a “total” and “global” policy against the Soviets that includes political, economic, psychological, and military methods.

Alongside the photograph is written the phrase, “Wirepuller Rockefeller” (Drahtzieher

²¹ Ibid. “Unruhen! Provokations! Mord!”

²² Ibid. “Es gibt keine weittragenden Aktion dieser Agentzentrale, die sie nicht selbst einfädelt.”

²³ “Die wahren Chefs des RIAS sind die Konzerngewaltigen der USA. Von ihnen wird auch der RIAS finanziert.”

Rockefeller).²⁴ The pamphlet then warns readers to take note of various RIAS officials working as spies: Program Director Wolfgang Schütz, Deputy Program Director Heinz Adolf von Heintze, and commentator Friedrich Noppert. Invoking Judas' betrayal, the author condemns with the declaration, "All of these creatures have sold themselves for thirty pieces of silver to Dulles and Rockefeller."²⁵

A document produced by the Ministry for State Security provides an interesting counterpoint to the pamphlet discussed above. The report, a general overview of RIAS operations, features a section on "Die Hintermänner" (sic), using the same phrase from the pamphlet. Critically, many of the same names appear: Allen Dulles, Eleanor Dulles, Hebert Hoover Jr., W.B. Jackson, and Lucius Clay.²⁶ The descriptions of each individual's tasks are also exactly the same. CIA Chief Dulles is the commander of the RIAS fifth column. Eleanor Dulles' section again notes that, "There is no long range action carried out by this agent center that she herself has not contrived"²⁷ The general argument of the report is the same as the pamphlet: RIAS is a US espionage center under the control of the US Government and financed by the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller foundations.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact year this document was made. "1955" is written on the top of it in pencil. The latest RIAS broadcast cited in the document is from that year as well. Herbert Hoover Jr. is also still listed as Deputy Secretary of State, a post he held until 1957. However, the document notes that the "director" of RIAS is Alexander Klieforth, who was not appointed until January 1959. To confuse matters, the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. "Alle diese Kreaturen haben sich für einen Judaslohn an die Dulles und Rockefeller verkauft!"

²⁶ Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor (RIAS) [1959?], Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, (BStU), Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, (MfS), Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe (ZAIG), 25253, 00006.

²⁷ Ibid. "Es gibt keine weittragenden Aktion dieser Agentzentrale, die sie nicht selbst einfädelte."

document lists Gordon Ewing as the “leader” of RIAS. However, Ewing had left the station in 1957 and was no longer even residing in Germany. Thus, most likely, the document was originally made during or just before 1955 and then updated by the *Stasi* in 1959 to acknowledge Klieforth’s appointment.²⁸

The similarities between the *Stasi* report and the Central Committee propaganda pamphlet indicate that they likely shared a common source however. Critically, the striking similarities show that the *Stasi* report was disseminated throughout various ministries of the East German government and SED departments, and reveals that a dialogue existed amongst the various departments of government and party in East Germany with regards to how to approach RIAS. The description of how the RIAS conspiracy worked was not just the product of propagandists in the SED, but part of a consistently developed analysis made by the *Stasi* and SED Central Committee. *Ein Mann kam nach Berlin* was not just propaganda, but also a visual and textual depiction of how the SED and GDR believed RIAS actually operated. The station was a fifth column geographically situated in the center of East Germany controlled by American imperialists, funded by American capitalists, and operated by German traitors.

The belief that RIAS was dangerous and threatening was a common theme of anti-RIAS posters and pamphlets. Some posters evoked this idea using fairly clear imagery, such as a poster featuring a cityscape of Berlin with the bright yellow words, “Vorsicht” (“Warning”) written above it. Underneath, colored in stars and stripes, is the word “RIAS.” Below this is written in green, “Gift” (“Poison”), with the letters dripping raindrops that transform into bombs.²⁹ The link between warfare and RIAS’s broadcasts

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *RIAS spielt Gift*. Poster at DHM.

created by this martial image was a common motif of anti-RIAS material.³⁰ A similar cartoon depicts a snake slinking up a radio tower atop a star-spangled RIAS logo. The snake, depicted with swastikas all along its body, has the head of a fork-tongued, wild eyed man. In his hand is a pen that he aims like a weapon. The cartoon is titled, “Die Giftspritze” (“Poison Injection.”).³¹ In 1955, SED Central Committee member Fred Oelßner explained the use of poison as a symbol of RIAS using the following analogy; “Do you believe that cyanide is poison, or do you want to try it out first?”³² RIAS was poison for individual Germans, the German Democratic Republic, and world peace. Like poison, one did not listen to RIAS to simply for curiosity. It was a life-threatening act that should not even be contemplated.

Many cartoons were fairly elaborate. Common to many of these was the image of a growling American soldier. Depicted snarling and wearing sunglasses, the soldier looked like a caricature of Dougal MacArthur. In his hand was usually some kind of weapon, (a bomb, torch, or machine gun), and he was usually depicted speaking into a RIAS microphone with the airwaves transforming from words into some kind of weapon. An example of this image is a small, three-panel cartoon featured in a 1952 edition of the newspaper, *Espenheimer Stimme*. In it, a US soldier speaks through a microphone. The second panel shows him disassembling the microphone. In the third panel, the microphone has become a machine gun, the US soldier ready to fire. Underneath is the phrase, “Wir schalten um!” (“We change gears!”)³³ Another cartoon, from a pamphlet

³⁰ Plakat der SED, Entwurf; Goralczyk, 1952, DHM P 90/937.

³¹ Cartoon in Heide Riedel, *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit...40 Jahre DDR Medien: Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Rundfunk-Museums 25. August 1993 bis 31. Januar 1994*, edited by Heide Riedel. (Berlin: Vistas, 1992)

³² Speech given by Fred Oelßner in Halle, October 21, 1955, from RIAS Report, *Soviet Zone Communist Official Concedes Influence of RIAS*, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositium, US Gremium (Robert Lochner), F501-00-00/0002.

³³ “Wir kämpfen gegen die Kriegshetz des RIAS,” *Espenhainer Stimme*, May 22, 1952, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut RIAS Bestand, F 304-01-04/0004.

for the fall 1954 state elections shows an American soldier speaking through a RIAS microphone, trampling on a roll of paper marked “Menschen Rechte” (“Human Rights”) In his hand is a burning torch. The pamphlet then asks, “Who recruits Agents and Saboteurs in Frankfurt an der Oder? Who wants to destroy our city? Who imperils the happiness of our children? It is RIAS!”³⁴ The poster concludes with the following:

RIAS is the enemy of every honest and upright German!
RIAS is the mouthpiece for the child murderers of Korea,
for the murderers of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, the
murderers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the murderers of
Bitburg. RIAS is the mouthpiece of those bankrupt
criminal bands, which want to plunge Germany into the
abyss of ruin in 1954. RIAS has ready in hand the torch
that will spark a new war for their employers, the US
Billionaires.³⁵

As a consequence of these factors, the pamphlet beseeches its readers to vote for the National Front candidates at the forthcoming elections.

As with many GDR radio broadcasts, the GDR anti-RIAS campaign sought to draw continuities between RIAS and the propaganda of the Nazis. A number of cartoons appeared featuring two grinning caricatures of Joseph Goebbels and Adolf Hitler looking down approvingly on a RIAS reporter. The caricatures were identical in each cartoon. One cartoon features a man lying in a chair, hand in the air in a gesture reminiscent of the Nazi salute, cup in hand, yelling through a RIAS and NWDR microphone. From the

³⁴ “Das ist der ‘RIAS’!”, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut RIAS Bestand, F 304-01-04/0004. “Wer wirbt in Frankfurt (Oder) Agenten und Saboteure? Wer will unsere Stadt zerstören? Wer gefährdet das Glück deiner Kinder? Das ist der ‘RIAS’!”

³⁵ Ibid. “ ‘RIAS’ ist das Sprachrohr der Kindermörder von Korea, der Mörder von Ethel und Julius Rosenberg, der Mörder von Hiroshima und Nagasaki, der Mörder von Bitburg. ‘RIAS’ ist das Sprachrohr jener bankrotten Verbrecherbande, die Deutschland 1954 in den Abgrund des Ruins stürzen wollten. ‘RIAS’ hält die Brandfackel eines neuen Krieges von seinen Auftraggebern, den USA Millioardären bereits in Händen.”

microphone are written a number of lies the poster claims have been made by the two stations: that Christmas is banned in the GDR, that the Rubel will be the new form of currency in the eastern zone, and that there is no remilitarization in West Germany. The cartoon then entreats its reader, “RIAS and NWDR are war-mongers! Smash the lies of the enemies of the people!”³⁶ The same exact caricatures of Hitler and Goebbels appear in another cartoon, this time behind a growling American soldier speaking into a RIAS microphone and carrying a bomb with a death’s head symbol on it. The cartoon then declares, “RIAS Hounding is War Hounding!”³⁷ A third example using the same Goebbels-Hitler caricature featured the two looking down upon an American soldier sitting behind a desk. On the desk lies a plan for an invasion of the Soviet Union. In the soldier’s hand is a RIAS microphone. Emitting from the microphone is a RIAS acronym: “R” for “Revanchepolitik” (Revenge Policy), “I” for “Intervention,” “A” for “Antibolschewismus” (Anti-Bolshevism) and “S” for “Spionage Sabotage” (Sabotage and Espionage). The cartoon is titled “Wem dient der RIAS?” (Who does RIAS serve?)³⁸

The pamphlets, cartoons, and posters cited above were intended to evoke fear of RIAS. It was not just a radio station, but also a dangerous spy center that aimed to plunge Germany into another war. Yet, not all anti-RIAS propaganda was aimed at depicting RIAS as a terrifying institution. Some targeted RIAS listeners, characterizing them as individuals whose gullibility and naiveté threatened to destroy the GDR and world peace. One of the clearest depictions of this notion is seen in a cartoon from the February 1, 1956 issue of *Eulenspiegel*. It depicts a buxom woman with a bottle of milk

³⁶ Cartoon, *Zerschlagt die Lügen der Volksfeinde!*, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut RIAS Bestand, F 304-01-04/0004, “Rias und NWDR hetzen zum Krieg! Zerschlagt die Lügen der Volksfeinde!”

³⁷ Cartoon, *RIAS-Hetze ist Kriegshetze!*, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut RIAS Bestand, F 304-01-04/0004.

³⁸ Cartoon, *Wem dient der Rias?* in Kundler, 174.

under one arm and a jar of honey in the other standing in the window of a cardboard house, with the RIAS logo overhead. A curious man reads a sign next to her that reads, “Here flows milk and honey.” Yet, it is clear it is a façade, for behind the woman is an army barracks and nothing else.³⁹ RIAS’s lies only seduced the naïve and easily manipulated. Another newspaper cartoon from 1952 illustrates this well. Entitled, “Der RIAS Hörer,” (“The RIAS Listener”) the cartoon depicts a man about to walk off a cliff. At the bottom are skeletons of old soldiers wearing Wehrmacht style steel helmets adorned with swastikas. The man is walking into a cloud, with “Lügen!” (“Lies”) and “Kriegshetze!” (“War Hounder”) written on it.⁴⁰

This style of propaganda could also be rather elaborate, and often relied on extended stories aimed at ridiculing individuals for listening to RIAS. Usually they involve an impressionable young man hearing a RIAS report and then falling into some unfortunate circumstance because he believed the story. He is forced to bear the mark for his foolishness, usually in the form of donkey ears. A 1957 pamphlet produced by the National Front illustrates this well. The pamphlet includes cartoons such as a reprint of the 1952 depiction of a US soldier transforming his microphone into a machine gun. It also includes a story, entitled, “Der RIAS und Herr Zacharias,”⁴¹ aimed at illustrating the consequences of listening to the station. The story shows “Zacharias,” (the name comes from a joke of endearment made by East German listeners about RIAS)⁴² who is always

³⁹ Cartoon, *Hier Fließt Milch und Honig*, *Eulenspiegel*, February 1, 1956, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut RIAS Bestand, F 304-01-04/0004.

⁴⁰ “Der RIAS Hörer,” *Friedenspost*, May 11, 1952, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut RIAS Bestand, F 304-01-04/0004.

⁴¹ Propagandaschrift der Nationalen Front gegen den RIAS Broschüre Berlin, 1957, “Der RIAS und Herr Zacharias,” DHM DG 57/2703.3 (MfDG) Rep VII/DDR3/F 9/M 20 (4).

⁴² To quote RIAS Director Gordon Ewing: “Yes, as a matter of fact there was a joke printed in the German press that summed up very nicely as to the listenership of RIAS in what was then the Soviet Zone. You may have heard the story. Well, a child is born, a male child, the parents are discussing what to call him, and the neighbor says, well, why don’t you call him Zacharias? Because then, everybody would call him Rias and everybody loves RIAS.” Gordon Ewing Interview, 11, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library.

depicted with asses' ears, listening to different RIAS reports and then running to fellow citizens to tell them what he has heard. Three sequences are presented, with narration provided in sing-songy couplets. The first depicts Zacharias entering a coalmine to tell workers of what RIAS has just reported only to be thrown in a mine car. The second shows him heeding RIAS's calls to stop working, only to be perplexed why he is no longer being paid. The final sequence depicts Zacharias going to a department store and switching all the radios to RIAS. This is rewarded with Zacharias's donkey's ears being tied in a knot and ends with him being thrown out the shop.

This style of propaganda attempted to isolate and ridicule RIAS listeners. Thus, the GDR sought to implement what Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann has described as a "spiral of silence," exploiting the individual's fear of isolation in order to silence deviant opinions as a means of building support for the so-called majority opinion.⁴³ The GDR anti-RIAS media thus deployed peer pressure as a means of depicting RIAS listening as both dangerous and vagrant. The anti-RIAS material never depicted the listener with anyone else as he heard station. He (and it was usually a man) also always faced severe consequences whenever he tried to pass on what he had heard to fellow citizens. The citizens, en mass, attempt to set him straight. The message was clear: listening to RIAS was the act of a naïve, isolated individual who did not understand the true dangers the station poses or share the principles of justice and peace inherent to socialism. It is something the vast majority of GDR citizens do not do, since the majority were loyal to a peaceful Republic.

⁴³ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion—Our Social Skin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

These longer narratives were a fairly common means for attacking the American station. A two page spread presents a series of stories explaining to readers that listening to RIAS made one a servant of the US and big capital. The spread proclaims with a couplet, “Du willst kein Ami-Söldner sein/drum schalte nicht den RIAS ein!” (“If you don’t want to be an American soldier then don’t turn on RIAS!”)⁴⁴ Standing behind a radio and RIAS microphone are two Americans, one the common growling American soldier, the second a man who bears a striking similarity to Franklin Roosevelt wearing a hat marked by a dollar sign. In his hand is a piece of paper marked “armament action” and in the other a tube marked “plague.” The spread tells three different stories explaining the consequences of listening to RIAS using cartoons. The first depicts a “dummy” who, ensnared by “jazz” and “dance music,” is brainwashed by the American station into trying to destroy a bridge. He is inevitably arrested. The second features a man who is enticed by tales of “Flüchtlinge” (“refugees”) to flee to West Germany, where he finds himself poor, destitute, and forced to enlist in the French foreign legion only to be killed in battle. The final story discusses RIAS’s use of the term “freedom,” noting that RIAS only cared about the freedom of war criminals (represented by individuals dressed in black with SS death’s head symbols on their hats), freedom for Krupp and Schacht, and freedom for treachery and waging war (depicted by the growling American soldier caricature spitting bombs from his mouth). The story closes with a rhyme: “Jedoch gezählt sind schon des Rias Tage/Auch unsere Heimat drüben macht sich frei/In weitem Bogen fliegt die Amiplage--/Der Rias ist dann sowieso dabei.” (“However RIAS’s days are already numbered/Our homeland over there makes itself free/from afar

⁴⁴ Cartoon, “Du willst kein Ami-Söldner sein, drum schalte nicht den RIAS ein!,” DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut RIAS Bestand, F 304-01-04/0004.

the Ami Scourge flees--/RIAS in any event is through.”)⁴⁵ The words accompany a photo of a cheering mob of workers carrying signs bearing the words “Ami go home,” “Unity,” and “Peace,” while throwing the tube of plague and the RIAS microphone at the two Americans, who are now drowning.

Both of these pamphlets display elaborate storylines anchored to motifs deployed throughout the anti-RIAS campaign. The critical themes are clear: RIAS was a dangerous espionage organization. Listening to it was both an act of stupidity and treason. No intelligent individual who cared about German unity and peace could listen to RIAS without realizing that its broadcasts were all lies. The station shared no interests with Germans, but was instead the tool of capitalist financiers in the United States who were manipulating both the US and West German governments.

Newspaper and radio broadcasts continued to dwell on the theme that only fools listened to RIAS. Simply switching on and listening to radio was magnified into a potentially dangerous act. Modifying the famous proverb, East German radio warned its listeners in a February 1953 broadcast that, “The road to hell is paved with RIAS broadcasts,” as a means of stressing the potential danger of listening to the station.⁴⁶ On March 11, 1952, *Neues Deutschland* published an editorial by Gerhard Eisler in which the GDR radio chief declared, “RIAS can only fulfill this role [of inciting war], however, because it has the help of this man who listens to RIAS beside his wide-open window. If the man does this out of pure stupidity, then it is certain that he can be convinced by

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Berliner Rundfunk, February 27, 1953, RIAS Press Report, Ewing Papers, RIAS News Clippings, Radio Scripts, Magazine Articles, 1953, Box 1, Folder 6, Marshall Library. Quotation and translation from official RIAS transcript of the story.

others that he ought to desist from this undermining activity.”⁴⁷ Eisler’s argumentation is revealing, for it shows not only the standard narrative that listeners were aiding the enemy, but also that, if they could easily be manipulated by RIAS, then it stood to reason that they could be just as easily swayed back to the GDR.

Attacks against RIAS listeners went beyond ridiculing listeners however, with many newspaper stories accusing RIAS of promoting espionage, crime, and murder.⁴⁸ Papers frequently condemned RIAS for promoting criminal activity. In a story from March 24, 1952 edition of *Volksstimme*, the paper wrote of a farmer, refusing to rent his room to a woman on the orders of an SED functionary, assaulted the functionary, leading to her death.⁴⁹ The story contended that, since he refused to listen to the radio of the GDR and hence be informed of the restructuring of the Republic, he was unaware that the functionary was in her rights. By only listening to RIAS, the farmer had become a criminal and “an enemy of peace and democracy.”⁵⁰

Naturally, the GDR’s radio stations were a common venue for launching anti-RIAS attacks. These broadcasts, sent out on all three major GDR stations (Berliner Rundfunk, Radio DDR, and Deutschlandsender) continued the general argumentation. Since the mediums were the same, the radio broadcasts often focused on style and method of delivery rather than content. Thus, rather than engage specific RIAS claims, radio in the GDR aimed to attack the style and character of RIAS broadcasting by contrasting it to East German broadcasts. In a June 16, 1955, a “Kommentar des Tages,”

⁴⁷ *Neues Deutschland*, March 11, 1952. Ewing Papers, RIAS News Clippings, Radio Scripts, Magazine Articles, 1953, Box 1, Folder 6, Marshall Library. Quotation and translation from official RIAS transcript of the story.

⁴⁸ See, for example, *Neues Deutschland*, September 26, 1952, *Junge Welt*, November 1952, *Das Volk*, April 9, and *Die Junge Welt*, July 31, 1952.

⁴⁹ Report: “Communist Linking of Local Crimes with RIAS,” Ewing Papers, RIAS News Clippings, Radio Scripts, Magazine Articles, 1953, Box 1, Folder 6, Marshall Library.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Translation by RIAS.

sent over the GDR's Program I and Program II,⁵¹ reporter Karl Heinz Gerstner asked his listeners to consider these differences: "Have we ever sent weapons, bombs, and the means to start fires to agents in the west? We do not do such rascally behavior."⁵² GDR radio, Gerstner claimed, did not cast aspersions against its enemies, and was above the petty attacks and tactics used by RIAS. Yet, ironically, in his protests against RIAS, he was in fact making the same kinds of criticisms against RIAS that he claimed they were making about the GDR. In 1956, Alfred Duchrow accused RIAS of propping up the corrupt West Berlin government. Attacking the government of West Berlin's Mayor Otto Suhr, Duchrow claimed that Suhr's administration was hopelessly mired in corruption and afflicted by scandals involving bribery, sex, and espionage. RIAS, along with West Berlin newspapers following the station's lead, had deliberately made efforts to discount the scandals and cast a favorable light upon the West Berlin government by focusing on Suhr's ailing condition.⁵³ Thus, Duchrow asserted that the station hoped to illicit concern for Suhr's health from listeners. Through the use of sentimental titles and language, Duchrow contended, RIAS lulled listeners into believing lies.

In pamphlets, newspaper stories, and radio broadcasts, the anti-RIAS media campaign shared a number of consistent motifs that created a cohesive argument against the station. It was, first and foremost, an enemy spy center utilized by the United States to launch a third world war. Listeners aided and abetted this organization and were guilty of treason against not only the state of East Germany, but peace and the unity of

⁵¹ See Chapter 3 for the institutional transformations of the GDR's broadcasters.

⁵² Sendemanuskript, "Kommentar des Tages," Programm I and II, June 16, 1955, Karl Heinz Gerstner, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B095-00-01/0009 Titel 0100. "Haben wir jemals Agenten mit Waffen, Brandsätzen oder Bomben nach Westdeutschland geschickt? Wir machen solche Schweinereien nicht."

⁵³ Sendemanuskripte, "Frühsendung: Im übrigen sind wir der Meinung....Was Dr. Suhrs Herz bewegt," Berliner Rundfunk, Radio DDR, January 31, 1956, Alfred Duchrow, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B095-001-0112 Titel 0033.

Germany. RIAS listeners were consequently criminals, vagrants, and terribly naïve and misguided. The aim was to make RIAS listeners feel isolated from the rest of the population.

As early as 1950, a RIAS official summarized the station's attitude to the East German attacks against the station: "For years they ignored us...and we didn't know they cared until they called us, 'A paid, stinking news-ulcer owned by foreign monopoly capitalists and criminal warmongers in the heart of Europe.'"

"It was the sweetest thing they could have said."⁵⁴

Harassment, the *Stasi*, and Trials

The anti-RIAS Campaign was not limited to articles, cartoons, and broadcasts. The GDR's Ministry for State Security also took an active role in the ant-RIAS operations, monitoring who listened to RIAS, infiltrating the station with informers, attempting to kidnap at least one RIAS worker, and staging mass arrests of RIAS listeners and contacts throughout the GDR.

Arrests and harassment were the logical extensions of the SED's general belief that RIAS was not a radio station but an espionage center operated by the Central Intelligence Agency and Army Counter Intelligence Corps. In November 1950, less than a year after the *Stasi* was created, its state secretary wrote a memo to the ministry administration, noting that, "The findings establish that the radio station 'RIAS' is developing into a spy center dedicated to the exercise of subversion, espionage, and

⁵⁴ Aileen S. Miles, "RIAS: The Truth Crusader," *Information Bulletin*, December 1950 (US High Commissioner for Germany), NARA RG 306 USIA subject Files 1953-2000, Box 77.

sabotage in the GDR and the Democratic Sector of Berlin.”⁵⁵ A decade later, the same language was being used by the *Stasi* to describe the station. In a 1960 report entitled, “The Subversive and Disruptive Activities of ‘RIAS,’” the *Stasi* declared, “RIAS is one of American Imperialism’s most important means for organizing psychological warfare, one of the most important espionage centers for the American secret services in West Berlin whose goal is to prepare and execute criminal attacks against the GDR and the rest of the countries of the socialist camp.”⁵⁶ The clearest expression of this was the, “fascist coup attempt” of June 1953 as RIAS sent coded transmissions over the air to provocateurs and saboteurs in East Germany. These attitudes were held throughout the East German government. A meeting report of the East German Supreme Court’s judges for example, noted the general threats facing the GDR and the need for the Supreme Court to take appropriate measures, noting that, “Within the context of the immediate preparation for war, these war incendiaries organize with their spies and agent centers directed by the American imperialists, especially from West Berlin, through the use of espionage, sabotage, and acts of terror in the German Democratic Republic.”⁵⁷ The language of the judges, describing “war incendiaries” and “agent centers” in West Berlin is clearly reminiscent of the language used in the GDR’s anti-RIAS posters, and it is certain, although the notes do not specifically discuss RIAS, that in the eyes of

⁵⁵ Staatsekretär, Ministerium für Staatssicherheit an das Ministerium Verwaltung für Staatssicherheit, November 13, 1950, BStU MfS Büro der Leitung (BdL) 002053, 0001. “Durch Ermittlungen wurde festgestellt, daß sich der Rundfunksender ‘RIAS’ zu einer Agentenzentrale, zur Ausübung von Wühlarbeit, Spionage und Sabotage im Gebiet der DDR und des Demokratischen Sektors von Berlin entwickelt.”

⁵⁶ “Die Wühl und Zersetzungstätigkeit des RIAS,” May 24, 1960, BStU MfS ZAIG Z 356. “Der ‘RIAS’ ist eines der wichtigsten Organe des amerikanischen Imperialismus zur Organisation der psychologischen Kriegsführung, eine der wichtigsten Agentenzentralen des amerikanischen Geheimdienstes in Westberlin zum Zwecke der Vorbereitung und Durchführung verbrecherischer Anschläge gegen die DDR und die übrigen Länder des sozialistischen Lagers.”

⁵⁷ Vorläufiger Arbeits und Diskussionsentwurf, January 10, 1955, Sekretariat des Präsidenten Niederschriften der Arbeitsbesprechungen der Richter des Obersten Gerichts Protokoll Nr. 246-281, BAB, DP2/3082. “Im Rahmen der unmittelbaren Kriegesverordnungen organisieren dies Kriegsbrandstifter mit ihren vom amerikanischen Imperialismus geleiteten Spionage—und Agentzentralen insbesondere von Westberlin aus die Durchführung von Spionage—, Sabotage—, und Terrorakten in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.”

the GDR's legal officials, RIAS was a subversive institution sending coded transmissions to saboteurs and traitors within the GDR.

Throughout the 1950s, the *Stasi* waged a number of actions aimed at disrupting the RIAS operation and preventing East Germans listening to the station. As with the media campaign, these actions focused on two targets: RIAS itself and those who either listened to the station or had made contact with it. The GDR harassed individuals known to listen to the station, infiltrated the station with informers, and at one point even attempted to kidnap a RIAS employee because it suspected she was an American spymaster.

Forms of intimidation ranged from harassment to intimidation. A November 1954 *Newsweek* story quoted an East German coal miner's warning: " 'You even had to be careful about whistling...One man I know listened to the American radio station RIAS Berlin. Down in the mine, he used to whistle absent-mindedly some of the catchy RIAS tunes. They arrested him.'"⁵⁸ In 1955, a Czech newspaper, *Cesta Miru*, the local periodical of the town of Liberec, published a story describing the situation of a German born resident of the village Novy Bor who was sentence to life in prison for espionage. The cause for his subversive activities, the paper declared, was RIAS. The man was described as a "zealous" listener of RIAS as well as a servant of "American Imperialism."⁵⁹ Frequently, refugees fleeing the GDR would describe the consequences of listening to the station when interviewed by RIAS reporters. A DIVO survey of East Germans visiting West Berlin during Green Week in the winter of 1960 revealed a

⁵⁸ "In the Red Uranium Mines." *Newsweek*, November 8, 1954. Excerpted in "A Selection of Reports and Letters Reflecting the Impact of RIAS in the Soviet Zone of Germany," DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, US Gremium (Robert Lochner), F501-00-00/0002.

⁵⁹ "Czech Military Court Sentences "Zealous" RIAS Listener," Summary of story from *Cesta Miru*, April 19, 1955, Excerpted in "A Selection of Reports and Letters Reflecting the Impact of RIAS in the Soviet Zone of Germany," DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, US Gremium (Robert Lochner), F501-00-00/0002.

number of consequences one could face if they were caught listening to RIAS. One visitor said his father had been fired because he listened to the station. Another noted that Free German Youth Alliance (FDJ) members would often come into peoples' apartments and check which station the radio dial was set to. They were primarily concerned with whether or not individuals were listening to RIAS. Said the respondent, "They don't mind if we have the radio tuned to Radio London, even though there isn't much difference between RIAS broadcasts and those of the BBC."⁶⁰ The GDR also harassed the station itself. Station Director Gordon Ewing recalled that, "For at least two years running before they gave it up, I would get phone calls at my house at 1:00 am or 3:00 am; there would be a voice from East Berlin saying, "Happy evening, Sie stehen auf der Liste," you know this sort of thing. Somewhat hard on my wife, I must say."⁶¹ The threats were considered real enough for Program Director Eberhard Schütz to sleep with a pistol in his room.⁶²

One letter sent to the station on June 19, 1955 reveals an elaborate campaign launched by the SED to harass listeners. RIAS officials considered the report to be a reference document for SED policies towards the station. The account, written by a refugee on behalf of both herself and her husband, noted what occurred one night as the two settled in to listen to a broadcast. "[The broadcast] was suddenly interrupted in a very unpleasant way (we were living in the East Zone at the time, of course), when we became the subject of attacks: stones were thrown through our windows; our sheds and stalls were broken into and tools and fuel were stolen. Someone chalked a big death's head with crossed bones on our house door and wrote under it the threat: 'You Westlings,

⁶⁰ East Zone Radio Listening and TV Habits, March 1960.

⁶¹ Ewing Interview, 27-28, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library.

⁶² Bahr, *Zu Meiner Zeit*, 75.

you RIAS listeners, your number's up.'"⁶³ The letter writer continued, noting that listening became near impossible due to disruptions such as rocks being thrown at windows and blinds being rattled. At one point, the listener claimed, protesters even attacked her cat, which was found bleeding on the veranda. The intimidation eventually prompted the listener and her husband to flee to West Berlin. It is important to note that a note from a RIAS official about the letter describes it as a representative document describing the consequences of listening to RIAS in the GDR. The RIAS officials translating and submitting the letter to the station managers did not doubt the truthfulness of the account.⁶⁴

The actions listed above were directed primarily at individuals listening to the station. However, the *Stasi* was also concerned that many East Germans visited the station. It is important to remember that, until 1961, the border between East and West Berlin was open. Consequently, individuals could freely pass between the four sectors of the city. East Germans could visit RIAS and return to their homes in the GDR that very day. Of particular concern to the *Stasi* was the RIAS Visitors' Office. Throughout the 1950s, thousands of East Germans visiting West Berlin would stop at RIAS, where station employees interviewed them about conditions in the GDR. For example, between August 5 and August 22 1951 alone, 15,000 people visited the station during the Communist's World Youth Festival, even though RIAS did not advertise the option of visiting.⁶⁵ A report from 1952 noted that, on average, 100 people visited the station a

⁶³ Letter from a refugee, June 19, 1955, in *A Selection of Reports and Letters Reflecting the Impact of RIAS in the Soviet Zone of Germany*, DRA Potsdam, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, US Gremium (Robert Lochner), F501-00-00/0002. Translation made by RIAS.

⁶⁴ Ibid. "The letter is submitted to demonstrate SED intimidation, loyalty of Soviet Zone listeners to RIAS, and the role of non-political broadcasts."

⁶⁵ HICOG: RIAS Handling of WYF Visitors, October 3, 1951, Ewing Papers, RIAS Official Reports, Box 1, Folder 5, Marshall Library.

day.⁶⁶ These visits became a critical source of information on conditions in East Germany and gave RIAS an important advantage in its broadcasts directed at the GDR.

The Visitor's Office became one of the primary targets of *Stasi* and SED efforts against the station. On October 25, 1950, the Weimar newspaper *Abendpost* reported that nine people had been arrested for visiting the station and urging boycotts of SED sponsored events.⁶⁷ Thus, subversive activity was traced to a connection with RIAS. The story reported that RIAS treated visitors to coffee, cake, and cigarettes, "so that they were completely caught in the web of this agitation agency and became its willing tools."⁶⁸ Sentences ranged from 15 years penal work to 12 years in prison.

Making contact with RIAS was a potentially treasonable act in the eyes of the *Stasi*. If nothing else, it immediately opened oneself up to *Stasi* surveillance. Even writing a letter to the station could be potentially dangerous. Nevertheless, thousands of East Germans took the risk. According to a 1958 USIS briefing paper, the station received an average of 1,000 visitors a month. 70% of these came from East Germany. It also received about 6,000 letters a month, with roughly 25% from the GDR.⁶⁹ A range of letters from 1959-1961 reveals a variety of topics. The majority concerned transcript requests, programming, and reception. Other letters asked the station about relatives in West Germany, US policies, and ways one could escape the GDR.⁷⁰ The letters were of great concern to the *Stasi*, as they were evidence of contact between the station and

⁶⁶ Soviet Zone Visitors to RIAS, [1952], Ewing Papers, RIAS Organization and Programming Information, Box 1, Folder 4, Marshall Library.

⁶⁷ Communist Imprisonment of RIAS Visitors, [1950], Ewing Papers, RIAS Organization and Programming Information, Box 1, Folder 4, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Max R. Grossman, USIA IAE German Affairs, *RIAS, Radio in the American Sector Berlin, United States Information Service*, Updated to February 1958, NARA RG 306 Subject Files Entry E1066 Stack 350 84/21/1-84/25/6 Master Location Register A1-1066 Box 77.

⁷⁰ Höerpost, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgut RIAS Bestand, H404-00-04/0024, H404-00-04/0026, H404-00-04/0027, H404-00-02/0028, H404-00-04/0029, H404-00-04/0031, H404-00-04/0032, H404-00-04/0034, H404-00-04/0041, H404-00-04/0039.

potentially subversive elements in the GDR. This can be seen in a 1952 report from *Stasi* operatives in the city of Halle.⁷¹ Letters from individuals to the station were intercepted and scrutinized. These same individuals were then monitored and placed under suspicion as possible spies and saboteurs. Even writing under a pseudonym was not enough to evade the *Stasi*'s eyes. Investigation reports from 1953 and 1954 reveal that the *Stasi* enlisted experts from the Kriminaltechnischen Institut to examine and compare handwriting samples to determine the identity of letter writers.⁷² In a bureaucratic society like the GDR, in which letters were still predominantly written by hand, a sample of someone's writing could be an incriminating fingerprint.

Beginning in 1952 and continuing throughout the remainder of the 1950s, the *Stasi* waged a number of campaigns against RIAS aimed at infiltrating and subverting its activities. The focus of these activities was on the Visitor's Office and its director, Lisa Stein. The *Stasi* believed that Stein was a critical figure in the RIAS hierarchy. However, perceptions of Stein are widely contradictory. Gordon Ewing recalled that she, "was not the brightest woman, she was very good at her job but she was not intellectually endowed, let's say."⁷³ He went on to note that she often became far too close to those she interviewed. A Central Intelligence Agency Report from 1964 that discussed the *Stasi*'s attempt to kidnap Stein in 1955 referred to her as "an interviewer with RIAS," and gave no indication that she was anything more.⁷⁴ Yet, her connection with East German visitors led many in the *Stasi* to assume she was a spymaster operating out of the station.

⁷¹ Dienstanweisung II/IV/50—Verbindungen zum Hetzsender RIAS, October 15, 1952, MfS Zentralarchiv Allg. S 410/57, 150.

⁷² Untersuchungsbericht: Handschriftvergleichung, April 27, 1953, MfS Zentralarchiv Allg. S 410/57, 225 and Untersuchungsbericht: Schriftuntersuchung in Sachen, January 7, [1954], , MfS Zentralarchiv Allg. S 410/57, 370.

⁷³ Ewing Interview, 29, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library. See as well Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, 133.

⁷⁴ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "Soviet Use of Assassination and Kidnapping: A CIA Memorandum of 1964," *Studies in Intelligence* vol 19, 3 (Fall 1975), in NARA, Record Group 263 Records of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), CIA-RDP78T03194A000400010014-6.

According to one report, Stein was connected to the US Air Force information services. “Both organize, with the help of other agents residing in West Berlin, a range of spy groups that administer their criminal activities within the German Democratic Republic.”⁷⁵ In a collection of dossiers on RIAS employees most workers get only brief, cursory biographies. Victor Klages’s file simply noted that he was a RIAS commentator. Stein’s entry, however, featured a long and detailed description of her appearance, what she frequently wore, her favorite jewelry, her address, and her daily activities.⁷⁶

Stein and the East Germans who visited her office were the primary targets of several *Stasi* actions. The most elaborate was called “Aktion Enten,” and ended with mass arrests and a show trial in 1955 at which five East Germans were convicted of espionage and one was executed. “Aktion Enten” began in October 1954 when the *Stasi* arrested Gerhard Beck, an East German who had been providing RIAS with information from his office at the Landwirtschaft Erfassungsstelle in Potsdam since 1953. Instead of going to prison, the *Stasi* gave Beck the option of working as an informant. On November 1, he obtained and copied a notebook belonging to Stein containing the names and addresses of a number of East Germans who had visited the station.⁷⁷

The ease with which Beck was able to steal such a critical piece of information from Stein belies the image of Stein being a cunning spy. In one bizarre episode of the “Aktion Enten,” operations, the *Stasi* even launched an elaborate plot to kidnap Stein. Once again the *Stasi* used Beck. On March 27, 1955 Stein was to meet Beck in a social

⁷⁵Bericht, Berlin 20.5.1954, BStU MfS, Archivierte Feindobjekt-Akte (AFO) 281/83, 00084. “Die Stein steht in Verbindung mit Oberst Bauer von amerikanischen Luftwaffen-Informationsdienst in Berlin-Tempelhof. Beide organisierten, mit Hilfe anderer in Westberlin ansässigen Agenten, eine Reihe von Spionagegruppen, die in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und in der Volksrepublik Polen ihren verbrecherische Tätigkeit ausüben.

⁷⁶ Auskunftsbericht, Betr: Information Services Division Radio Branch—RIAS, Kufsteiner Strasse 69, June 7, 1955, AFO 281/83, 00026-00083.

⁷⁷ Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, 133.

engagement at a café, at which time he would give her a box of chocolates poisoned with scopolamine in order to render her unconscious. She would presumably fall unconscious outside the café, at which point two *Stasi* agents, masquerading as concerned bystanders, would come to help Stein and take her to a hospital in the Eastern Sector of the city. However, contrary to the *Stasi*'s expectations, Stein did not pass out until she returned home. Concerned neighbors brought her immediately to the hospital. Had they not done so, she would have likely died.⁷⁸ This bizarre affair attests to just how concerned the *Stasi* was about Stein and the information she had obtained in her interviews.

Deutschland Radio Kultur even made the event into a radio play broadcast as part of that station's celebration of RIAS's sixtieth anniversary in 2006.⁷⁹

Lisa Stein survived and escaped kidnapping. The same cannot be said for those arrested based partly on information from Stein's notes. In March, 1955, the *Stasi* arrested 49 individuals believed to have had connections to the American station. They were targeted based both on the information from Stein's notebook and on constant surveillance of who came to the station. The accused came from throughout the GDR and a variety of professional backgrounds, ranging from workers to a mayor and judicial officials.⁸⁰ A large chart from the *Stasi*'s files on the operation reveals an elaborate network of individuals all connected in some way to either Stein or her co-worker, Franz Siegel, a former resident of East Germany. The chart broke the suspects down into those who were certain to be agents and those whose status was unclear. It also indicated who

⁷⁸ "Soviet Use of Assassination and Kidnapping,." See as well Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, 132-133.

⁷⁹ Marianne Weill, *Der Hund war nicht geplant!: 60 Jahre RIAS Berlin*, Broadcast on Deutschland Radio Kultur on February 1, 2006. The play description reads: "Geplant war eine von der DDR-Staatsicherheit organisierte Entführung in den Ostsektor. Denn Frau Stein war Mitarbeiterin des RIAS und stand auf der Schwarzen Liste. Marianne Weill hält sich weitgehend an den Berliner Kriminalfall von 1955, der im Rückblick einem grotesken Schurkenstück gleicht." Accessed on August 17, 2007 at <http://www.dradio.de/dkultur/sendungen/hoerspiel/459016/>.

⁸⁰ Karl W. Fricke and Roger Engelmann, "Konzentrierte Schläge," *Staatssicherheitsaktionen Und Politische Prozesse in Der DDR 1953-1956* (Germany: CH Links Verlag, 1998). For this particular case, see Chapter 6.6 "Der RIAS vor Gericht—der Fall Joachim Wiebach und andere.", 174.

lived in West Berlin.⁸¹ The majority of those under suspicion were workers, most of who were attached to a Volkseigener Betrieb (VEB) or some other industrial operation in the GDR. One was a member of the Liberal Party. According to the final report drawn up on the operation, all 35 individuals under suspicion were guilty of two things: visiting RIAS and forging a connection with either Stein or Siegel and provided either one or both with information on the working conditions and operations at their respective position.⁸² The *Stasi* accused one suspect of encouraging fellow workers to participate in the “coup attempt” of June 17, 1953. The report described the man and his family as “asocial.” In a similar vein, the *Stasi* ruled the family relations of another suspect to be “schlecht” and noted that his wife, “drank and smoked too much” and was known to entertain many male acquaintances.⁸³ The *Stasi* characterized another suspect as “an opponent of our system,” and believed he was “an SPD Man.”⁸⁴ Thus, the *Stasi* felt that weak moral character contributed to subversion and criminality. Such individuals, it could be assumed, were easily duped by RIAS broadcasts.

Of those arrested during Aktion Enten, five were put on trial in June of 1955. As Manfred Rexin notes, almost all political trials in the GDR during this period cited RIAS as a cause contributing to the treasonous actions of the accused.⁸⁵ However, these trials usually cited listening to RIAS as one of many causes for the traitorous act. In this case, however, the five defendants were put on a public show trial in order to show the East German people, “that RIAS is an American Agent Center whose single purpose is to

⁸¹ “Personenkreis aus dem GV ‘Enten’” BStU, MfS AOP 433/57 Bd 1, 42.

⁸² Abschlußbericht, “Enten,” January 20, 1956, BStU, MfS AOP 433/57 Bd 1, 344-350.

⁸³ Zwischenbericht, “Enten,” January 14, 1955, BStU, MfS AOP 433/57 Bd 1, 54-63.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Manfred Rexin, “Feindsender” RIAS, *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit...40 Jahre DDR Medien: Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit...40 Jahre DDR-Medien: Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Rundfunk-Museums* 25. August 1993 bis 31. Januar 1994, edited by Heide Riedel. (Berlin: Vistas, 1992?), 38.

divide Germany and disrupt understanding between the Germans, instigate subversion against the GDR, and support the imperialist's war plans, for which West Berlin is the principle staging area.”⁸⁶ The chief defendant, Joachim Wiebach, was a decorator accused of giving RIAS confidential information when he visited the station during the spring of 1954. These included personnel lists and information on the SED and leadership of the FDGB. As the verdict noted, “In so doing, RIAS and the American secret service received advance knowledge of state visits of leading individuals from friendly nations, of special celebrations, receptions, and the like and would be...in the position to even prepare, in minute detail, assassination attempts.”⁸⁷ During the proceedings, he was also accused of revealing military secrets on troop strength and Red Army deployments to the US Counter Intelligence Corp (CIC). Upon seeing the initial sentence of life in prison, Walter Ulbricht personally crossed out the recommendation and wrote, “Recommend death sentence.”⁸⁸ Consequently, Wiebach was executed. His four co-defendants were given lighter sentences ranging from 8 years to life in prison. By 1964, all four would be released.

The *Stasi*'s concerns were not entirely driven by misperceptions and paranoia. RIAS did encourage East Germans to visit the station and give the broadcaster information on conditions in the GDR. RIAS *had* encouraged East Germans to openly take to the streets and oppose the SED state on June 17, 1953. Just days after the

⁸⁶ Plan für die Vorbereitung eines Prozesses vor erweiterter Öffentlichkeit gegen den amerikanischen Hetzsender “RIAS” vom 15.5.1955, cited in Fricke and Engemann, “*Konzentrierte Schläge*,” 175. “Es soll bewiesen werden, daß der ‘RIAS’ eine amerikanische Agentzentrale ist, deren einziger Zweck darin besteht, die Spaltung Deutschlands zu vertiefen, die Verständigung der Deutschen untereinander zu erschweren, Wühlarbeit gegen die DDR zu betreiben und die Kriegsvorbereitungen der Imperialisten zu unterstützen, wobei Westberlin der Hauptstützpunkt dazu ist.”

⁸⁷ Fricke and Engemann, “*Konzentrierte Schläge*,” 176. “Auf diese Weise erhielt der RIAS und der amerikanische Geheimdienst im voraus Kenntnis von Staatsbesuchen führender Persönlichkeiten befreundeter Länder, von besonderen Feiern, Empfängen und dergleichen und wäre [...] in der Lage gewesen selbst Attentate bis in alle Einzelheiten vorzubereiten.”

⁸⁸ Fricke and Engemann, “*Konzentrierte Schläge*,” 175.

uprising, the Eisenhower administration's Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) proposed that RIAS continue to fan the flames of opposition, declaring that the protests presented "the most promising opportunity yet seen for effective U.S. psychological and political attack upon Soviet power in the area."⁸⁹ Yet, in the same memo, the PSB also recommended that RIAS avoid stirring up open revolt. Furthermore, the PSB noted that US covert operations in East Germany were limited and insufficient to supporting an open revolt against the SED state.⁹⁰ Thus, while RIAS was certainly an important weapon in the US's arsenal for psychological warfare, it was not the vast nerve center of all espionage activities in East Germany. As seen in the PSB memo cited above, the CIA itself did not have the capability to undertake the kind of operations the *Stasi* claimed were being coordinated by RIAS.

The 1955 RIAS Trial and "Aktion Enten" clearly demonstrates that, in the eyes of the SED and Ministry for State Security, RIAS was not merely a radio station, but an espionage center situated in West Berlin. Thus, although the trials and "Enten" were directed at the station, the *Stasi* was more concerned with individuals visiting the station than people listening to it. The trials and undercover actions also demonstrate that the anti-RIAS material being broadcast and printed was not just propaganda, but reflected deep concerns on the part of the leadership of the East Germany. RIAS and its broadcasts were a matter of national security.

Broadcast Jamming

⁸⁹ Psychological Strategy Board, "Interim US Psychological Strategy Plan for Exploitation of Unrest in Satellite Europe," June 22, 1953, NARA RG 263 (CIA), CIA-RDP80-01065A0003000100044-6, 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Despite the persistence of propaganda pamphlets, radio broadcasts, *Stasi* operations, and trials, the most effective means for preventing GDR citizens listening to RIAS was frequency jamming. Pamphlets and trials were intimidating, but they could not stop East Germans from secretly switching on their radios in what privacy they still had. When, in the spring of 1960, East Germans visiting West Berlin were asked in a DIVO survey whether they still listened to RIAS, just 2% of those who responded “no” said it was because it was too dangerous to listen to the station.⁹¹ A report made later that year confirmed this finding, noting that respondents who chose not to listen to RIAS did so mostly because they could not receive the transmissions and not because they adhered to an opposing political viewpoint.⁹² The articles, pamphlets, and broadcasts showed little effect on RIAS’s popularity. By 1960, it was still the most popular news broadcaster in East Germany, with three in four East Germans citing it as their preferred source for news.⁹³ For the most part, despite the *Stasi* and fear of prosecution, East Germans felt they could safely (and discreetly) listen to the station. However, as easy as it was to turn the radio dial to RIAS, transmission jamming could make such a move fruitless.

In 1951, RIAS listeners could choose between long wave, medium wave (AM), and ultra short wave (FM) frequencies. Each wavelength had different characteristics in terms of quality of reception and ease of transmission, and as a result it was common for stations to broadcast on a diverse number of wavelengths during the 1950s.⁹⁴ The GDR pursued efforts to jam RIAS on all of these frequencies. Frequency jamming is a fairly

⁹¹ DIVO, *East Zone Listening and TV Viewing Habits*, March 1960, Entry 1007B, 250/67/07/01-03, Box 35

⁹² DIVO, *East Zone Listening and TV Viewing Habits, (And Some Data about the RIAS Image)*, November 1960, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Office of Research, Research Reports 1953-1986, Entry 1007B, 250/67/07/01-03, Box 35.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ See Kundler, *RIAS Berlin*, 138.

basic process by which disruptive noise such as half tones or engine sounds are broadcast at a higher power along the same wavelength as another radio station. Such an act disrupts the transmissions on the prescribed frequency, rendering the station inaudible. Sometimes, alternative broadcasts can be transmitted over these same frequencies, but with greater power. A radio station trying to combat jamming either has to broadcast on different frequencies or broadcasting using more powerful transmitters, with FM frequencies being the best means to cut through the disruption.⁹⁵ Thus, the appropriation of equipment and a diverse number of frequencies was necessary for RIAS and other stations if they were to confront the GDR challenge.

In an interview given in 1982, former RIAS chief Gordon Ewing recalled the East German jamming operations:

Yeah, after it became so obvious that RIAS had tremendous political influence in the Soviet Zone, the DDR government established many jammer transmitters, big and little. Incidentally, this is one reason we took up FM when it was developed because you cannot jam FM very easily. We were at various times heavily jammed but we had several different ways of getting through, and as I say, also FM with an exceptionally wide range. Yes, the DDR spent a lot of money trying to jam us out.⁹⁶

The interviewer, Brewster Chamberlin, then asked, “It was obviously never very successful?” to which Ewing responded, “No they weren’t.”⁹⁷ Chamberlin and Ewing’s optimistic judgment, made twenty years after Ewing’s tenure as RIAS director obscures the very real concerns amongst both RIAS officials and West Germans concerning the

⁹⁵ For a good overview of the mechanics and history of jamming, see Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 20-45.

⁹⁶ Interview, Ewing Papers, Marshall Library, 26.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

jamming of broadcasts throughout Germany and Europe. Letters and memos exchanged between RIAS and officials in Washington and Bonn reveal that the jamming problem was of the utmost concern.

Since RIAS was the principle target of jamming, the GDR's campaign threatened to isolate the American funded radio station from the rest of the West German stations. A meeting report of the Federal Committee for All-German affairs from February 1953 notes that one participant, RIAS's program director Eberhard Schütz, warned that unless new frequencies were obtained for the Federal Republic's broadcasters, none of the West German stations would be audible in the Soviet Zone due to 4 to 5 jamming transmitters being built there. Interestingly, Schütz made sure to point out that it would be a "fallacy" to presume that this was a problem only effecting RIAS."⁹⁸ In April, 1953, Schütz reiterated the concern to an official in the Ministry for All-German affairs, describing the situation as "catastrophic" and noting that RIAS had lost nearly 40% of its listeners. He noted that he was willing to come to Bonn to discuss solutions to the problem.⁹⁹

The fact that Schütz had to point out that RIAS was not the only station in danger of jamming indicates that at least some, if not many, West German radio officials did not feel their stations faced a similar threat. By the fall of that year, the problem had become more acute for the American station. The June 17 uprisings had led to a new and more intense wave of jamming operations, a clear indication of how the GDR believed RIAS had triggered the uprising.¹⁰⁰ In September 1953, Ewing wrote a letter to USIA Director Theodore Streibert to inform him that, "The jamming is very bad now, beyond a doubt.

⁹⁸ Vermerk: February 19, 1953, Z3-340, Meeting of the Bundestagsausschuss für gesamtdeutsche Fragen, 12. Februar 1953, BAK, B 137/13241.

⁹⁹ Memorandum, April 17, 1953, BAK, B137/16258

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum from the Director's Office, USIA, September 21, 1953, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Office of the Director Chronological Files of the Director, 1953-1956, Entry 1006, 250/64/03/03-04, Box 1.

We will stand on our heads to get through one way or the other.”¹⁰¹ By the winter of 1954, HICOG officials were informing the US press that RIAS was being jammed in about half of the GDR.¹⁰² By 1957, the GDR operated about 300 jamming towers.¹⁰³

The clearest indication of the jamming’s impact came in a number of independent surveys made by both NWDR and the West German government over the course of the next three years. The first, made by NWDR’s Listener Research department in December 1953 indicated that, for the first time since 1948, RIAS was no longer the most listened to general broadcaster in East Berlin.¹⁰⁴ Of the 560 East German refugees questioned, 52% chose NWDR as the station they listened to most, with only 34% selecting RIAS. However, the survey made sure to point out that this was not due to programming preferences, as it concluded that RIAS programs remained just as popular as NWDR Berlin’s, and both broadcasters were more popular than the three GDR stations (Berlin I, II, and III). The survey concluded that, “NWDR comes before RIAS as the most listened to Western Broadcaster in the Eastern Zone because it can evidently be received better in all of the parts of the Zone.”¹⁰⁵ What is also clear is that many listeners preferred even partially jammed stations to the GDR stations, as the survey noted that, despite situations where the three GDR stations could be clearly heard, listeners still preferred Western broadcasters.¹⁰⁶ While only a minority sought out the western broadcasts for purely political information, the survey showed that many GDR listeners were not necessarily

¹⁰¹ The letter is quoted by Streibert in a memo to Erickson, September 4, 1953, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Office of the Director, Chronological Files of the Director, 1953-1956, Entry 1006, 250/64/03/03-04, Box 1.

¹⁰² “Soviet Jamming Blots U.S RIAS Broadcasts,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 5, 1954.

¹⁰³ Max R. Grossman, USIA IAE German Affairs, *RIAS, Radio in the American Sector Berlin, United States Information Service*, Updated to February 1958, NARA RG 306 Subject Files Entry E1066 Stack 350 84/21/1-84/25/6 Master Location Register A1-1066 Box 77.

¹⁰⁴ Flüchtlingsbefragung, December 1953, NWDR Hörerforschung, BAK, B 137/1324.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., “Der NWDR steht vor RIAS an der Spitze der meistgehörten Westsender in der Ostzone, weil er offenkundig in allen Teilen der Zone bessere Empfangsmöglichkeiten bietet.”

¹⁰⁶ Flüchtlingsbefragung, December 1953, NWDR Hörerforschung.

turning to the local broadcasters when the western stations were no longer an option. The jamming was effectively preventing listeners from listening to RIAS, but listeners were not turning to the GDR stations. Subsequent surveys taken by the Ministry for all German Affairs (Bundesministerium für Gesamdeutsche Fragen) confirmed NWDR's findings from December 1953. In May 1955, 670 refugees from East Germany were asked to name which station experienced the most consistent jamming. Nearly three-quarters listed RIAS as the most jammed western broadcaster.¹⁰⁷ However, at this point the station's listener numbers had risen, with 72% noting they regularly listened to RIAS. However, NWDR remained the most popular station.¹⁰⁸

The surveys taken by the West German government and NWDR reveal a number of results, but perhaps the clearest is that frequency jamming isolated RIAS from the other West German stations. While others were jammed, in particular SFB, RIAS was clearly the GDR's principle target. The changes in listener preferences further revealed that RIAS's losses were West German stations' gains, and not the gains of GDR stations. Finally, the surveys reveal that GDR citizens were not easily deterred from listening to the western stations, and were willing to accept partial jamming. The fact that jamming did not occur uniformly throughout the day, with the majority of nighttime and morning broadcasts jammed while midday transmissions were left relatively uninterrupted, made such a decision possible. Furthermore, the act of listening became a much more labored and involved process when listening to a jammed station. The struggle to hear RIAS

¹⁰⁷ Ergebnisse einer Befragung von 670 Sowjetzonenflüchtlingen über Rundfunkempfangsmöglichkeiten in der SBZ, May 1113, 1955, BAK, B 137/1324. The exact result was 73.1%

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 81% listed NWDR as their preferred station.

through the static meant that listeners would likely pay far closer attention to the words being broadcast by the American station.¹⁰⁹

The situation showed little sign of improvement as the decade progressed. Reports made by the USIA in the late 1950s stressed that listener numbers were being severely curtailed by jamming. In December 1957, after a period of good reception, USIA officials interviewing East German visitors to West Berlin noted that in all areas RIAS was no longer the preferred station of GDR residents. When asked in 1956 “To which stations do you usually listen?,” 57% answered RIAS. A year later, the percentage was even lower, at 35%, just a little over a third. In contrast, NDR (Nord Deutscherfunk, one of the two successor stations of NWDR) received 64%. More discouraging was that the three GDR stations were the most popular, collectively receiving 77%. However, even in this area, RIAS suffered a considerable drop in numbers, with only 28% selecting RIAS when asked the question, “On which stations do you mainly rely in order to obtain as trustworthy a picture as possible of the most important political events?” NDR received 46%.

The quality of the reception was cited as the principle reason for the drop. “The key to RIAS’s losses apparently lies in the trouble people have in hearing its programs,” the report declared.¹¹⁰ It further implored readers to “keep in mind that the reception of RIAS’s programs is a resultant of many factors. *The most important of these are number of strength of the jamming stations assigned to RIAS’s frequencies.*”¹¹¹ The report further noted that those who could hear RIAS the best were more likely to rely on it for

¹⁰⁹ Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*, 23.

¹¹⁰ Research Staff, Office of Public Affairs, American Embassy, *Radio Listening in the GDR*, Report No. A-18, Series no. 3, December 19, 1957, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Office of Research, Field Research Reports 1953-1978, Entry 1007B, 250/67/07/01-03, Box 35.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* Italics mine.

news. Content and style of presentation was not cited as a critical reason for the listener numbers.

The situation showed little improvement a year later. A 1958 report observed that the “general picture of reception conditions for RIAS programs as reported by its listeners is not a good one.” Of RIAS’s short wave listeners in East Germany, six out of ten noted, “reception is so bad that they can hardly hear anything.”¹¹² Even FM broadcasts were considered too weak by listeners, and in all regards, the general opinion was that RIAS reception was worst than it ever had been. In comparison, West Germany’s stations enjoyed superior reception on all wavelengths. Even SFB, which suffered from similar frequency interruptions due to its location within Berlin, enjoyed somewhat better medium wave reception.¹¹³ Whereas in 1954, RIAS faced just 25 jamming transmitters, by 1956 it confronted 250 such installations with more being built each year.¹¹⁴ By 1961, the number had reached at least 600.¹¹⁵

The reports discussed above reveal that officials in the West German government, West German radio stations, and the USIA all independently reached three important conclusions. First, while it was not the only factor informing listener choice, reception was a critical influence in determining which radio stations individuals in the GDR chose to listen to over the course of the 1950s. Jamming made a difference. Second, RIAS was the primary target of East German frequency jamming. Third, West Germany’s stations, with the exception of the West Berlin based SFB (due to its location within the GDR),

¹¹² Research Staff, United States Information Agency, American Embassy, Germany, *Station Popularity and Reception Conditions within East Germany*, Report No. A-22, Series 3, November 17, 1958, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Research Reports on German Public Opinion, Entry 1005, 250/67/04/02-04, Box 11.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Max R. Grossman, USIA IAE German Affairs, *RIAS, Radio in the American Sector Berlin, United States Information Service*, Updated to February 1958, NARA RG 306 Subject Files Entry E1066 Stack 350 84/21/1-84/25/6 Master Location Register A1-1066 Box 77.

¹¹⁵ USIA Report, *RIAS: A Free Voice of the Free World*, [1961], NARA RG 306 (USIA), Subject Files 1953-2000, RAIS (sic) 1950-1988, Entry E1066, 350 84/21/1-84/25/6, Box 77.

generally avoided transmission disruption. The East German campaign against RIAS threatened to isolate the American funded station from the rest of West Germany's broadcasters.

It is important to consider these conclusions when analyzing the debates that erupted when RIAS requested the use of an FM frequency from the West German government in 1958. During the 1950s, RIAS had taken a number of measures to confront the jamming, the most important being the use of multiple channels sent on different frequencies, two on middle wave and one on long wave.¹¹⁶ However, FM was a much more effective means for breaking through the disruption. According to USIA Public Affairs Officer Ned Nordness, FM broadcasting and technical improvements were the critical means for combating the East German jamming towers.¹¹⁷ Consequently, in 1958 RIAS requested that the West German Federal Ministry for Post and Communications allow RIAS to use a FM frequency for its Hof transmitter to broadcast into the southern regions of East Germany. The debates over this decision would last for the next three years, and would not be resolved until the summer of 1961, just weeks before the erection of the Berlin Wall. The debates reveal both that RIAS was often isolated from the rest of the West German broadcasters and that members of the West German government considered RIAS a potential lightning rod in an otherwise stable situation with regards to broadcasting in both Germanys. By the late 1950s, many officials began to consider RIAS a liability and a potential source of disruption to the normal operations of West Germany's state managed radio stations.

¹¹⁶ USIA Report, *RIAS Berlin 1958*, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, RIAS 1950-1988, Entry E1066, 350 84/21/1-84/25/6, Box 77.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Ned Nordness, Public Affairs Officer, to William L. Clark, Assistant Director (Europe), USIA, May 21, 1958, NARA RG 306 USIA subject Files 1953-2000, Entry E1066, 350 84/21/1-84/25/6, Box 77.

The concerns revolved around what German officials called a “Rundfunkkrieg.” (Literally a “Radio War”). The term does not refer to a war of words or ideologies fought over the airwaves, but in fact to the use of transmitters and jamming to disrupt the normal, orderly operations of radio broadcasting throughout the two Germanys. In the course of a “Rundfunkkrieg,” stations would be disrupted either by static noise or transmissions sent over rival station frequencies. Memos drawn up between 1952 and 1961 from the Ministry for All German Affairs and Ministry for Post reveal deep concerns about an “open Radio War” and the need for “Radio Provisions for the Populace in the Case of an Open Radio War.”¹¹⁸ The language connotes a chaotic and unpredictable situation held at bay by an uneasy truce. Several West German officials feared that RIAS threatened to disrupt this peace.

Memos and letters exchanged between various West German Federal ministries certainly reveals officials’ concerns with the East German Jamming towers. Beginning in January 1953, officials from the Ministries for All-German affairs, Ministry for Post and Communications, and from NWDR watched with concern as the GDR erected large 500 kW towers that could disrupt northern Germany’s radio broadcasts.¹¹⁹ Subsequent meetings indicated that countermeasures were limited. While West Berlin could be served by a wired broadcasting network (similar to the one utilized by RIAS in 1946), there was no way to guarantee broadcasts reception in the Soviet Zone. The final concern was that, in the event of a “radio war” breaking out, only a third of the Federal Republic’s transmitters could counteract East German jamming by using FM wavelengths.

¹¹⁸ Memorandum, *Rundfunkversorgung der Bevölkerung im Falle eines offenen Rundfunkkrieges*. The memos can be found throughout BAK, B 137/16258.

¹¹⁹ See Memorandum from the Bundesministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen to Northwestdeutsche Rundfunk, January 8, 1953, Barch B 137/16258 and Letter from Emil Dovifat, NWDR to State Secretary Thedieck, Bundesministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen, February 9, 1953.

A memo from the Minister for Post and Communications from 1954 illustrates what kind of consequences a “radio war” could have. The disruption went beyond static noise being sent over the airwaves. The memo outlines a number of possible scenarios. The first, as discussed, was jamming radio station broadcasts through the use of disruptive noise. A powerful enough noise could even disrupt the station transmissions outside of the GDR, thus affecting listeners in the Federal Republic. The second was a more aggressive approach that would have sent actual propaganda broadcasts over the airwaves of the Federal Republic’s stations, thus not only disrupting them but also replacing them with East German radio programming. Another possibility included a process by which the disrupting broadcaster would actually share the frequency and allow an East German speaker to add comments and asides to West German broadcasts that could undermine reports and programming. One would hear both the West German broadcast and the East German commentators thoughts at the same time. Finally, there was the threat of a “Schwarzsender,” an illegal station sending unregulated broadcasts throughout the West German airwaves.¹²⁰ The measures for confronting the possibility of a “radio war” were substantial. They included building new long, middle, short, and FM transmitters, the construction of an improved “wired broadcast” network in Berlin, and various technical innovations, costing some 470 million marks.¹²¹

Thus, a “radio war” was a costly affair, and one that the West German government was not eager to fund. As a result, RIAS’s request to broadcast on an FM frequency raised concerns that were expressed in a meeting attended by the Minister for All-German Affairs, the Minister for Post and Communications, various state secretaries,

¹²⁰ Memorandum from der Bundesminister für das Post und Fernmeldewesen, August 20, 1954, BAK, B 137/16258.

¹²¹ Ibid.

and a representative from Bavarian Radio.¹²² It was the responsibility of the Minister for Post and Communications, Richard Stückeln, to apportion and monitor the various frequencies in the Federal Republic. Since the Hof transmitter was in Bavaria, the matter also concerned both Bavaria's radio station and the Bavarian government. Supporting the measure was the Ministry for All-German Affairs and its leader, Ernst Lemmer. Responsible for building a bridge between the Federal Republic and those Germans living in the GDR, Lemmer and his State Secretary Theodore Thedieck were naturally concerned with overcoming as much of the Soviet Zone jamming as possible and allowing West German broadcasts to reach East Germany. Since the late 1950s, the Ministry had also been subsidizing part of the station's budget. Beginning in 1958 the US Congress had cut the RIAS operating budget, feeling that other overseas media operations required more support.¹²³ At the same time, RIAS operating costs were on the rise. Thus, beginning in 1958, the Ministry for All-German affairs provided a subsidy of about \$225,000 to fund programs of mutual interest to both RIAS and the Ministry, including the Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.

Both RIAS and the Ministry had ideological and economic motives for seeing the broadcasts break through to East Germany. Yet, at the January 29, 1960 meeting, the representative from the ministry found himself alone amongst the participants in supporting the new frequency. State Secretary Herzt expressed his concerns and those of other critics clearly, as they feared that the recent "frequency truce" between the two German states could be upset. The meeting minutes noted, "Professor Herzt indicated, that the erection of a UKW Transmitter in Hof could possibly disrupt this frequency

¹²² Memorandum to the Minister for All-German Affairs, January 29, 1960, BAK B 137/16257.

¹²³ Proposal for Increased Support for RIAS, 1958, BAK, B 137/16257

peace and provoke a Radio War, during which, not only will our broadcasts along the Zone's border be disrupted, but the reception of our broadcasts into the Soviet Occupation Zone could also be inhibited.”¹²⁴

The counter argument made by the Ministry for All-German affairs was that allowing RIAS broadcasts through East Germany was a critical component of the Federal Republic's policies of reunification and unity. The ministry also expressed concern about how the refusal to grant the station an FM transmitter would look to the United States government:

The US government could easily conclude from this hesitation, that the Federal Government is becoming fundamentally unsteady. It has gained the impression, that the Federal Government is no longer pursuing its All-German policy with full force and no longer use the means it has at hand. Such a position would suggest to the United States that they may reexamine their own position. The consequence could be a withdrawal of the United States government out of Berlin, at the least a heavy dismantling of their radio commitments, which are now happening to RIAS. Yet, a withdrawal of RIAS from Berlin could again become a symbol for the changing of the allied position with regards to the West Berlin Question.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Memorandum to the Minister for All-German Affairs, January 29, 1960, BAK, B 137/16257. “Prof. Herzt deutete dann an, daß die Errichtung des UKW Senders in Hof diesen Wellenfrieden möglicherweise stören und einen Rundfunkkrieg heraufbeschwören würde, der nicht nur unseren Empfang im Zonenrandgebiet empfindlich stören könne, sondern der auch unsere Sendung in das Gebiet der Sowjetischen Beatzungszone hinein weitgehend inhibieren könne.”

¹²⁵ Ibid. “Es könne leicht sein, daß die US Regierung aus diesem Zögern folgere, daß die Bundesregierung grundsätzlich hinsichtlich ihrer allgemeinen Politik der Zone gegenüber schwankend geworden sei. Gewänne sie den Eindruck, daß die Bundesregierung die gesamtdeutsche Politik nicht mehr mit vollem Nachdruck verfolge und nicht mehr von den ihr angebotenen Mitteln Gebrauch machen, so würde eine solche Haltung der US Regierung möglicherweise die Frage nahelegen, ihre eigene Haltung zu überprüfen. Das Ergebnis könne ein Rückzug der amerikanischen Regierung aus Berlin sein, zumindest ein starker Abbau ihres Rundfunkengagements, das sie durch RIAS heute noch eingehe. Ein Rückzug des RIAS aus Berlin jedoch könne wiederum zu einem Symbol für die veränderte Haltung der Alliierten in der Westberliner Frage werden.”

The Ministry reasoned that the reluctance to support the new transmitter went beyond both technological concerns and security for West German broadcasting. It threatened the solidarity of the US-West German alliance and jeopardized Western commitments to Berlin. RIAS was a symbolic representation of the United States in West Germany. Consequently, its relationship to the Federal Republic was considered an indication of broader US relations with the West German government.

The dispute reached the very top of the West German Federal and State governments. On February 11, 1960, the Minister President of Bavaria, Hans Erhard, sent a letter to Chancellor Adenauer reiterating concerns about a new “radio war.” He noted that, since 1957 West German stations had been left to freely broadcast. RIAS’s move would be considered a provocative action that would most likely end this peace. Referencing the January 29 meeting with Minister Stückeln, Erhard stressed that a majority of the meeting participants were against the new frequency. However, a decision had been postponed due to the far-reaching consequences the final decision would have for the Federal Republic.¹²⁶ Naturally, the United States government also became involved. In March, 1961, the US ambassador to West Germany argued that, since RIAS had been broadcasting from Hof since 1952, the use of a new frequency would not change the situation, and thus would not provoke a Soviet response.¹²⁷ The ambassador also cited the agreement signed between the Federal Republic and United States permitting free use of the Hof transmitter, noting that nothing had occurred to change the applicability of that agreement.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Letter from Hans Erhard to Konrad Adenauer, February 11, 1960, BAK, B 137/16257.

¹²⁷ Letter from the US Ambassador, March 29, 1961, BAK, B 137/16257.

¹²⁸ Ibid. For a copy of the “Agreement between the United States and the Federal Republic Regarding Operations of Certain Radio Installations from Within the Federal Republic,” see NARA RG 306 (USIA), Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, RIAS 1950-1988 Box 77.

The Federal Government finally agreed to grant RIAS's request, three years after the initial proposal was made. A verbal note was relayed on July 25, 1961, granted the station the frequency of 91.2 MHZ.¹²⁹ The decision, coming just weeks before East Germany officially sealed its border with West Berlin came at a fortunate time. The debate over whether or not to grant the new frequency is an illuminating one however, for it reveals a number of important points about the nature of political radio in the Cold War and the symbolic nature of the various radio stations in Berlin. In the various letters and memos drawn up on the issue, it is interesting to note that in none of them was there major concern expressed about what RIAS was actually broadcasting. The same state of affairs marks the station's proposals to the Ministry for All-German Affairs. In none of the memos or letters was the suggestion made to ask RIAS to broadcast less provocative or critical reports in order not to provoke a GDR reprisal. Thus, there was an acknowledgement that RIAS's broadcasts were necessary and an important part of building an All-German policy for the West German government. The concerns were grounded in what the reaction of the East German government would be, not with what RIAS would report. It was accepted that, no matter what RIAS broadcast, it would provoke jamming. The SED campaign to prevent its citizens listening to RIAS had gone beyond the content of the broadcasts. The very name of RIAS and its position within West Berlin had become a provocative and heated element in inter-German relations. By simply trying to broadcast on a better frequency, RIAS risked provoking reprisals.

Conclusion

¹²⁹ Auswärtiges Amt Verbalnote, July 25, 1961, BAK, B 137/16257.

Throughout the 1950s, the GDR utilized a wide range of methods to discourage its citizens from listening to RIAS and other West German stations. The East German government also undertook efforts to sever contact between East German citizens and the radio station. It did this primarily for both ideological and security reasons. RIAS was considered a war agitator and a threat to the creation of an appropriate socialist mentality amongst the citizens of the GDR. It was also seen as a center of espionage sending coded broadcasts to saboteurs and hidden enemies within the GDR. Consequently, the ability to hear it needed to be managed and curtailed.

The various methods used by the GDR had varying degrees of effectiveness. The least effective, yet most elaborate in terms of presenting a counter ideological argument, was the use of newspaper stories, pamphlets, posters, and radio broadcasts to discourage listening. This campaign presented two broad lines of argument: first RIAS was a fifth column within the GDR controlled by monopolist industrialists and imperialists in the United States that sought to provoke a war of destruction in Germany. Second, those who listened to RIAS were a naïve yet troublesome minority guilty of supporting war and of treason.

As elaborate as this propaganda campaign was, it was not a particularly effective means of discouraging listening to RIAS. The GDR thus pursued tactics outside of the studio and outside of ideological confrontation. First, it harassed listeners, imprisoned them, and infiltrated RIAS with *Stasi* informers in an attempt to disrupt the actual station operations. However, a far more effective counter-RIAS technique was jamming. This method, which was perhaps the simplest, was also the most effective, for it simply prevented listeners from being able to hear the station. Thus, whereas in 1953 about 70%

of GDR citizens selected it as the station they listened to most, by 1957 only about a third of GDR residents selected RIAS as their preferred broadcaster. Surveys made by both the West German and US governments as well as West German radio stations such as NWDR concluded these numbers were directly linked to transmitter interference. These reports all indicate that jamming was a real and significant cause for audience number fluctuations.

The effectiveness of the jamming campaign had consequences that went beyond the radio conflict between RIAS and the GDR. Since RIAS was the primary target of transmitter interference, West German stations felt a sense of security from jamming that was quickly challenged when RIAS requested a more effective FM frequency in order to better broadcast into the GDR. Officials in Bavaria and in government organs such as the Ministry for Post and Communications found themselves in conflict with RIAS, the US government, and the Ministry for All-German Affairs. Although the dispute was settled in RIAS's favor in 1961, the debate lasted three years. Occurring during a period when the West German-US alliance was perhaps at its strongest, the debate still reveals the uncertainties regarding the US presence in West Berlin and concerns that its goals and activities were not necessarily in accord with those of the West German government. It also reveals the isolation of the Ministry for All-German affairs, which relied on RIAS to help build a bridge between the Germans living in the GDR.

The jamming campaign is also indicative of broader trends in East German politics during the 1950s. Unable to combat RIAS either ideologically or through the use of *Stasi* informers and undercover actions, it chose to simply use jamming technology to metaphorically seal the GDR border and insure that RIAS broadcasts could not enter East

Germany's airwaves. However, as effective as this practice was, by 1961 RIAS was broadcasting over enough jamming resistant FM frequencies to keep its audience numbers at levels equal to those of the early 1950s. In the face of jamming, *Stasi* operations, and propaganda campaigns, RIAS's East German audience remained resilient and intent on listening to the station.

The GDR campaign against RIAS is an excellent illustration of how an authoritarian state can not only control the shaping of political culture but also try and manage its reception. It demonstrates that, while radio was a critical factor in the shaping of rhetoric, ideology, and political language, the same technology could be used to disrupt and hinder its dissemination. In this regard, the GDR enjoyed far greater success in controlling the reception and diffusion of political culture than it did in actually shaping it. The GDR was able to prevent more people from listening to RIAS by broadcasting static noises bereft of content rather than broadcasting reports that actually engaged RIAS's broadcasts or attempted to present a counter-argument.

Chapter Six: Berlin Radio from the Secret Speech to the Construction of the Berlin Wall, 1956-1961

By the mid 1950s, Berlin was serviced by three major radio stations as well as a large number of stations that broadcast from outside of Berlin, such as the BBC, the stations of the British and American Armed forces, Radio DDR, and Deutschland Sender. Throughout the decade, the three main Berlin stations: SFB and RIAS in West Berlin and Berliner Rundfunk in East Berlin, continued to pursue goals they had established for themselves at the start of the 1950s.

The period between 1956 and 1961 was a critical one in the course of the Cold War. The death of Stalin sparked a period of transition as his successors vied for control over both the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Union. By 1956, Nikita Khrushchev had succeeded in establishing himself as the new leader of the Soviet state. In March, he shocked the world when he denounced Stalin during his secret speech before the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party. Khrushchev's new leadership seemed to promise a relaxation of Communist control in the Soviet Union and a thaw in relations with the West. Yet, as 1956 progressed, it became apparent to the states of the Eastern bloc that there was a limit to how much Khrushchev was willing to relax control. In June of 1956, Soviet tanks violently suppressed labor riots in Poland. Then, in the fall of 1956, reform communists in Hungary declared that the state would be embarking upon its own course of socialism and would withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets responded with a brutal crackdown at the beginning of November and reinstalled a loyal Communist government. The international outrage against this act was overshadowed,

however, by the almost simultaneous invasion of Egypt by a British, French, and Israeli coalition aimed at opening the Suez Canal.

While these events did not impact Berlin directly, they were nevertheless critical in the history of communism in Europe and the solidarity of the Eastern Bloc. In 1958, however, Berlin once again became the focus of the Cold War as Khrushchev declared that the Soviet Union would sign a separate peace treaty with the GDR if the Western Allies did not come to a settlement concerning the city, thus threatening allied rights to West Berlin. Khrushchev's threat would be periodically reiterated until 1961 when, due to the increasing flight of East Germans to West Germany, he sanctioned the construction of the Berlin Wall and closed the border between the two Germanys. The act effectively brought a disagreeable though diplomatically tolerable resolution to the Berlin issue, an issue that had dominated relations between the two superpowers since the end of World War II.

This chapter examines how Berlin's radio stations confronted and examined the events between the 20th Party Congress and the erection of the Berlin Wall. For all three major stations (SFB, RIAS, and Berliner Rundfunk) the period was one in which practices developed at the beginning of the decade continued to shape how journalists reported the events of the Cold War. At the same time, the stations' broadcasts reflected the changing diplomatic landscape as it became apparent to observers that there was not going to be an immediate solution to the German Question. Thus, by the time the Berlin Wall was constructed, Berliner Rundfunk and other stations in East Germany could justify it as the logical solution to the security threat posed by the provocateurs living in West Berlin. RIAS and SFB, on the other hand, would react with the same outrage

expressed by much of the West German media as the realization that Germany would remain divided was given grotesque manifestation.

1956: From the Secret Speech to the Uprising in Hungary

The complex reasons behind Khrushchev's decision to secretly denounce Stalin before the members of the Soviet Communist Party in February are beyond the purview of this dissertation. The consequences of this decision nevertheless play an important part in the development of political culture in Europe, especially in the Communist Bloc. The sudden condemnation of the former leader of the world communist movement for over two decades was a dramatic and unexpected act on the part of the Soviet Union's new leader.¹

The speech was particularly problematic for the SED, especially since Ulbricht and other leaders had sought to shape the GDR along Stalinist principles. For West Berlin's stations, it provided an opportunity to exploit divisions within the eastern bloc and attack the legitimacy of the Communist Party. Yet, at the same time, it puzzled many, who questioned why Khrushchev had given the speech in the first place. On March 28, 1956 SFB freelance commentator Richard Löwenthal presented a review of the speech. Born in 1908, Löwenthal was a prominent public intellectual and journalist. Residing in London until 1959, (after fleeing there in 1938 due to both his left-wing affiliation and Jewish background), he worked as a political journalist, providing commentaries for both radio and newspapers on the nature of communism, democracy,

¹ For a good overview of the speech and its consequences, see Francois Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 446-451. See as well Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991*, (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 315-350.

and the Cold War.² His SFB broadcasts reveal how his experiences as a former member of the German Communist Party gave him particular insight into the nature and character of the Soviet Union. On Khrushchev's speech, he noted that, "...one must ask himself, why such an open, systematic critique has come to pass, a critique which can only shake the regime's authority and especially the position of Stalin's former accomplices?"³

Noting that most the Stalinists in the Soviet Communist Party were no longer in power, Löwenthal cautioned listeners from assuming that cynical goals or internal party rivalries motivated Khrushchev's actions. Nor did the reasons lie in a legitimate wish to liberalize the Soviet system. As Löwenthal reminded his listeners, "Was not Khrushchev one of the most brutal of Stalin's associates? Was he not the hangman of the Ukraine during the Great Purge of 1937/38 and the whip of the failed anti-peasant experiment of the agricultural cities at the beginning of the 1950s?"⁴ In fact, Löwenthal contended that the cause for Khrushchev's destalinization lay in a Soviet Thermidorean movement. Lower level communists were the driving force of this reactionary movement. With the Soviet state now a world power, many of these functionaries bristled at the thought of a repressive party. As Löwenthal argued, "20 years of social developments and the self-consciousness caused by victory in war has made these thermidorean tendencies greater. Furthermore, Khrushchev no longer has an all-powerful secret police at his disposal, a consequence of Khrushchev's own decision to weaken the organization during the first

² For a biography of Löwenthal, see Oliver Schmidt, *"Meine Heimat ist - die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung": biographische Studien zu Richard Löwenthal im Übergang vom Exil zur frühen Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007).

³ Richard Löwenthal, "Die Opferung Stalins" March 28, 1956, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (AdSD), Nachlass (NL) Richard Löwenthal 397, SFB 1954-1958. "Umsomehr muss man sich fragen, warum sie jetzt auf einmal zu einer so offenen, systematischen Kritik uebergegangen sind—einer Kritik, die die Autorität des Regimes und insbesondere auch ihre eigne Stellung als ehemalige Komplizen Stalins erschuettern muss."

⁴ Ibid., "War nicht Chruschtschew einer der brutalsten unter den Mitarbeitern Stalins, der Henker der Ukraine in der grossen Sauberung von 1937/38, der Einpeitscher der misslungenen, bauernfeindlichen Experiments der Agrostaedte Anfang der 50er Jahre?"

succession struggles. Thus, the pressure of the army and the party bureaucracy has become greater.”⁵ Consequently, Khrushchev’s actions were based on the tactical need to maintain his authority over the Soviet system. Despite these limited goals, Löwenthal predicted the Soviet leader’s decision would have greater consequences. “The criticism of Stalin and the condemnation of 20 years of Stalinism have brought the developments in Russia into a state of flux, in a far greater state than we would have considered possible in the past.”⁶ As he closed, Löwenthal marked the end of an era. “The saga of the legend of Stalin is over. The saga of his work’s disintegration continues.”⁷

RIAS’s reporters also used Khrushchev’s speech as an opportunity to highlight problems within the Soviet system. On March 19, 1956, RIAS’s chief foreign commentator, Heinz Frentzel, discussed the secret speech. Like Löwenthal, he sought to explain to listeners why he thought Khrushchev had felt the need to present such a startling denunciation. As he opened, he stressed the dramatic rupture created by Khrushchev’s actions. Recalling a photograph depicting Khrushchev, Beria, Molotov, Bulganin, and Malenkov before Stalin’s coffin, Frentzel noted that at one time all communist party leaders bowed down before “the evil, violent Georgian.” Now this was no longer true.⁸ Drawing upon an editorial by Walter Ulbricht from *Neues Deutschland*, Frentzel noted that the criticism of Stalin was severe. As Frentzel said, “Stalin is to be

⁵ Ibid. “Die thermidorianischen Tendenzen sind um 20 Jahre gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung und um das Selbstbewusstsein eines gewonnenen Krieges stärker, und Chruschew hat keine ebenso allmächtige Geheimpolizei mehr zur Verfügung, nachdem er sie in den ersten Nachfolgekämpfen selbst entscheidend geschwächt hat. Um so grosser wird der Druck der Armee und der Buerokratie auf die Partei.”

⁶ Ibid., “Mit der Kritik an Stalin, mit der Verurteilung von 20 Jahren Stalinismus ist die Entwicklung in Russland in Fluss gekommen, stärker, als wir es noch gestern fuer moeglich gehalten haetten.”

⁷ Ibid., “Die Geschichte der Stalinlegende ist zuende. Die Geschichte der Aufloesung von Stalins Werk geht weiter.”

⁸ Heinz Frentzel Kommentar, “Chruschtschow contra Stalin,” RIAS, March 19, 1956, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0010. “Die knechtische Unterwürfigkeit, in der die kommunistischen Parteigrössen aller Länder jahrzehntelang vor dem bösen, gewalttätigen Georgier auf dem Bauche gelegen hatten, trieb noch einmal ganz wilde Blüten. Und jetzt, drei Jahre und ein paar Tage danach, ist alles nicht mehr wahr.”

damned, there can be no doubt about that.”⁹ Khrushchev was not saying anything the world outside of the Soviet Union did not know already. Like Löwenthal, Frentzel was quick to remind his listeners that Khrushchev was not innocent of Stalin’s crimes, noting that anybody who had reached the pinnacle of the Soviet system had done so with Stalin’s support. And again, like Löwenthal, Frentzel was quick not to ascribe altruistic motives to Khrushchev’s sudden admission of Stalin’s crimes. However, unlike Löwenthal, Frentzel did not see the admission so much as a tactical move, but as an inevitable consequence of Stalin’s death. “With the end Stalin’s terrible dominance, the truth will break out sooner or later. It does not emerge because Khrushchev is in love with the truth, but because the truth cannot remain suppressed forever, because it simply breaks through when the almighty power begins to diminish.”¹⁰ Soon, Frentzel warned, Khrushchev, Premier Nikolai Bulganin, and Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan would pervert and distort the truth to suit their goals. Thus, Frentzel beseeched listeners to pay attention to what Khrushchev’s next moves would be, as it was important to be aware of how the Soviet leaders would utilize the recent so-called revelation of Stalin’s crimes for their own foreign ambitions.

Neither Frentzel nor Löwenthal believed that Khrushchev had been motivated by the wish to have an honest and frank public discussion of the Soviet past. For both commentators, it was clear that political motives and ambitions rested behind the speech. In Löwenthal’s SFB commentary, “Thermidorean” forces seeking a relaxation of party control pressured Khrushchev to denounce the dictator. According to Frentzel’s

⁹ Ibid., “Stalin ist also verdammt worden, daran ist kein Zweifel mehr.”

¹⁰ Ibid., “Mit dem Ende der Macht des Fürchterlichen, bricht die Wahrheit früher oder später aus tausend Fugen hervor, nicht etwa, weil Chruschtschow die Wahrheit um ihrer selbst willen liebt, sondern weil die Wahrheit nicht für immer zu unterdrücken ist, weil sie beim Nachlassen der schier allgewaltigen Macht einfach durchbricht.”

commentary, the speech was an inevitable consequence of the diminishing power of the Stalinist state.

East German radio did not address the secret speech outright. Instead, it addressed the speech only after western radio stations and newspapers began running stories about the address. As a result, the tone of the East German response was to focus on the western media and characterize its response as an overreaction. On March 22, 1956 Deutschlandsender broadcast a commentary from Gerhart Eisler denouncing western distortions of the 20th Party Congress. Eisler accused western papers and stations of exploiting the criticism of Stalin as a means of disrupting and dividing the socialist camp.¹¹ Eisler then cast the western media and western leaders as hypocrites.

“Yesterday, my very esteemed brain trust gentlemen, you charged the leadership of the SED and the entire Party with praising Stalin uncritically; today you charge our Central Committee and all of us with agreeing to the criticism of Stalin’s policy, thoroughly proved and (documented?) at the 20th Congress of the CPSU.”¹² Eisler then suggested that western critics were “almost horrified” by the criticism of Stalin. The frank admission of Stalin’s mistakes strengthened the socialist camp, and thus presented a threat to the capitalist powers. Eisler described self-criticism as a weapon that would only strengthen the power of Germany’s socialists and allow them to achieve victory. Eisler’s broadcast then began to carry a triumphant tone. “Please note once and for all that you cannot beat us Socialists—either in Germany or anywhere in the world—either

¹¹ Gerhart Eisler Kommentar, Deutschlandsender, March 22, 1956, from Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe, March 23, 1956, NARA RG 263 (Records of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)), Foreign Broadcast Information Service, (FBIS), 263/150/62/20/3 Box 128. Translations by CIA.

¹² Ibid.

with so-called brain trusts or with weapons.”¹³ He then declared that critics had failed to acknowledge the true accomplishments of the congress:

This Party Congress—not only because of its Sixth Five Year Plan, not only because of its new, varying political conclusions, and not the least because of its criticism of the mistakes of Stalin and the corrections it made—this Party Congress has revealed the enormous strength, the enormous and justified self-confidence, of this revolutionary Party which the peoples of the Soviet Union call their Party; which all class-conscious workers of the world call their splendid, magnificent, fraternal Party.¹⁴

Thus, Eisler continued to utilize a theme developed by the SED years before Khrushchev’s speech, namely that open and frank criticism was an expression of strength. Just as Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler and Herbert Gessner had interpreted the introduction of the New Course in June 1953 as evidence of the superiority of the East German system, so too did Eisler interpret the Secret Speech as evidence of socialism’s inevitable victory over capitalism.

However, just as the New Course had helped spur the June 17 uprising, so too did the Secret Speech lead to upheaval in the Eastern Bloc. In the summer and fall of 1956, the Warsaw Pact was rocked by open revolts in Poland and Hungary. In Poland, the death of the Stalinist Boleslaw Bierut, occurring just months after the secret speech, prompted the removal of other Stalinists from the Polish government and to the release of political prisoners. The relaxation of the state’s repressive measures sparked riots in Poznan in June. By October, the Polish Communist Party brought to power Wladyslaw Gomulka. A victim of Stalin’s anti-Titoist purges during the late 1940s, Gomulka was

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

elected against Khrushchev's wishes. Flying to Warsaw to prevent the appointment, he was dramatically rebuffed by the Polish Communist Party and forced to acknowledge Gomulka's election as the new first secretary on October 19.¹⁵

The Soviet Union's recognition of Gomulka's national communist regime in Warsaw seemed to portend dramatic change in the Eastern Bloc. Since July, the Soviets had sanctioned a number of leadership changes in Budapest. Concerned that the events in Poland could be duplicated in Hungary, they had initially forced the resignation of the hard-line Stalinist Mathias Rakosi, only to see him succeeded by the equally hard-line Erno Gero. This did little to stem the calls for reform spreading across central Europe. Encouraged by the compromise reached in Poland in October, students and workers began to stage demonstrations and then openly rebelled against the Soviets and the Communist government. In order to restore order, Khrushchev sent Soviet troops into Hungary on October 23. However, unlike East Germany in 1953, the tanks were unable to put down the revolt. For the next five days, fighting raged in Hungary, predominantly in Budapest. The Soviets removed Gero and subsequently made the reform communist Imre Nagy party leader, hoping that he could reach a similar compromise to the one reached in Poland. Nagy negotiated the removal of Soviet troops on October 28, 1956. However, many of the rebels were unwilling to accept a national communist solution like the one reached in Poland just days before. Thus, Nagy began to pursue a far more radical path than Gomulka. Upon reintroducing a multi-party system, Nagy then announced that Hungary would henceforth be a neutral state on November 1, 1956. On

¹⁵ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 209-210.

November 4, Soviet forces invaded the country and toppled Nagy's government. His successor, Janos Kadar, subsequently reasserted communist control over the country.¹⁶

Radio played a critical role in the Hungarian Revolution, just as it had during the June 17 uprising. The comparison between RIAS's actions on June 17 and those of the USIA, émigré run station Radio Free Europe is telling. Hungarians able to hear past the jamming interpreted RFE Broadcasts as official statements from the United States.

Furthermore, RFE's programming were prone to exaggerate assertions and often failed to clearly delineate US policies towards Hungary and Eastern Europe, often insinuating that the US would intervene in support of any armed action on the part of the Hungarians.

Thus, the active participation of RFE in the Hungarian uprising and the challenges this posed RFE's staff mirrored the same problems faced by RIAS's staff three years earlier.¹⁷

RFE reporters actively sought to fan the flames of the revolution. RFE programs vigorously encouraged Hungarians to press for more gains and overthrow the government of Imre Nagy. Despite Nagy's more moderate position, and the very real possibility of a Titoist solution for Hungary, RFE reporters created the impression that a complete overthrow of the communist system was possible and necessary. RFE also avoided mention of the fact that substantial Soviet forces capable of crushing the uprising were present in the country. On November 4, for example, a broadcast promised US military

¹⁶ For a detailed account of the Hungarian Revolution and its place within the diplomatic history of the Cold War, see Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt*, (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006). For an overview of the general consequences of Khrushchev's Secret Speech on the solidarity of the Eastern Bloc, see Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 189-220. See as well Krystyna Kersten, "1956: The Turning Point," in *The Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, 1945-89*, ed. Odd Arne Westad, Sven Holtmark, and Iver B. Neumann (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 47-62.

¹⁷ For more on RFE's broadcasts, see Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 96-107. See as well Gary D. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: The BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1956-64* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) and Bernd Stöver, "'Liberating the Captive People:' Die Sender Radio Free Europe und Radio Liberation und die Befreiungspolitik der USA," *Rundfunk und Geschichte* 1 (1998), 39-45.

intervention. As historian Charles Gati noted, there can be no doubt that the broadcasts were inflammatory in nature.¹⁸

It is difficult to draw a direct comparison between RIAS's actions on June 16-17, 1953 and RFE's actions over the course of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. For one thing, the June 17 uprising was over almost as soon as it had begun, whereas the Hungarian Revolution lasted over ten days. However, there are many parallels. Both RFE and RIAS were staffed by men and women dedicated to seeing the fall of communism in their homelands. Consequently, even the slightest hint that this could happen was cause for enthusiasm and anticipation. It should also be recalled that Eberhard Schütz's June 16th broadcast openly encouraged the demonstrators to press for more demands and was overly optimistic, predicting the fall of the GDR. He also made no mention of the very real possibility that Soviet troops would intervene. However, in hindsight, and especially when we draw a comparison with RFE's actions in the fall of 1956, one can see that RIAS Political Director Gordon Ewing's decision to tone down RIAS's rhetoric on June 17 was a prudent one. Unfortunately, the reporters at RFE did not recognize the lessons that RIAS had learned in 1953: that radio broadcasts made in the name of the United States could have a tremendous and potent impact on listeners eager to see the overthrow of communism in their country. The Soviets, Ewing and his staff realized, could easily misinterpret this potency as an expression of US aggression. For the Hungarian fighters of October 1956, RFE promised American intervention. It was a promise, it will be recalled, that even Eberhard Schütz and Egon Bahr would not make on June 17.

¹⁸ Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 168.

The comparison between October 1956 and June 1953 is an important one to consider, as reporters at RIAS, SFB, and the GDR's broadcasters all perceived the uprising through the lens of June 17. This was most clearly apparent in the broadcasts made by the GDR's three radio stations, Berliner Rundfunk, Deutschlandsender, and Radio DDR. All three stations frequently deployed the language of "X-Day," once again blaming reactionaries and fascist provocateurs for starting another east European uprising. Once again, reactionaries in the west were using radio broadcasts to disrupt order in Hungary. On October 28, in the midst of the revolution, Horst Sindermann, speaking on Deutschlandsender, condemned Hungarian capitalists and counterrevolutionaries, declaring, "Today the question in Hungary is: dictatorship of the counterrevolutionaries or rule of the workers. In Munich the seedy greedy Hungarian counts and barons gather, criticize the people's state in Hungary, and appeal for the intervention of imperialist armies. And of course we do not forget that the capitalist press and radio are trying to dislodge the workers from their class outlook and to mislead them."¹⁹ By citing the "greedy Hungarian counts" in Munich, Sindermann was clearly condemning the émigrés working for RFE (whose European headquarters was in Munich). Sindermann then invoked Hungary's past, noting that in 1919 the forces of reaction had defeated revolution. "This and only this can be taken as the point of departure in a survey of the tragic events in Hungary if one wants to be properly informed about them."²⁰ Sindermann then condemned the claims being made by Hungarian revolutionaries that the uprising was a nationalist uprising, noting that Hungary's dictator

¹⁹ Hörst Sindermann Kommentar "Hungarian Capitalists Behind Revolt," Deutschlandsender, October 28 1956, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe October 29, 1956, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 119.

²⁰ Ibid.

Miklos Horthy had made the same claims. Yet, it was the Soviet army that had liberated Hungary from fascist and Nazi control in 1945.

Interestingly, although East German reporters freely condemned the uprising as a counterrevolutionary act, they rarely brought up the June 17 uprising in their broadcasts. On October 26, 1956, von Schnitzler condemned the hypocrisy of western observers who supported the Hungarian uprising yet did not support anti-colonial uprisings in Algeria and Kenya.

There must be different types of risings for sympathies to be so unevenly distributed. Indeed, it appears to me useful, especially in connection with the Hungarian example, to point out that in fact there are risings and risings, and that not every one served progress or amounts to revolution. There are anti-progressive, counterrevolutionary risings, and the German workers are well aware of this. In 1920 they themselves smashed one of them—the so-called Kapp Putsch.²¹

Along with the Kapp putsch, von Schnitzler also cited Franco's seizure of power in Spain in 1936 and the US intervention in Guatemala in 1954 as examples of counterrevolutionary uprisings. He continued to use the same language GDR media organs had used to condemn the June 17 uprising. "Certainly it is not the Hungarian workers and peasants, regardless of the fact the hired agitators behind such reactionary Putsch attempts always succeed in deceiving some working people about the true aims of the attempted rising and in inducing them to unconsidered participation."²² Once again, "agitators" were "deceiving" the workers into taking action against true democrats.

²¹ Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler Kommentar, "Hungarian Rising in Putsch Tradition," October 25, 1956, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe October 26, 1956, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 119.

²² Ibid.

Furthermore, von Schnitzler justified the Soviet crackdown by declaring, “For the relapse of a socialist country into counterrevolution would inevitably mean its return to the war camp, increase the danger of war, and noticeably disturb the atmosphere which today is characterized by the desire for an easing of tension and which dominates the whole world.”²³ World peace and security thus depended on a Hungary firmly in the socialist camp.

Yet, the length of the uprising coupled with the Soviet Union’s oscillation between opposition and acceptance meant that a clear-cut approach was not readily apparent for the East German stations. Between October 28 and November 3, it seemed as if the Soviets were willing to accept Imre Nagy’s reformist government.

Consequently, GDR stations aimed to downplay the reformist character of the Nagy government. On October 29, 1956 Gerhart Eisler characterized Nagy’s policies as being firmly in line with socialist and democratic principles in a commentary for Radio DDR:

The aim of the program of the Nagy Government and the Hungarian Workers Party, and of their first measures, is quite clearly the grand reconciliation of all honest, patriotic Hungarians, a genuine strengthening of the Hungarian people’s power by incisive democratic, social, and economic measures so that the future can be built on what is good and lasting while everything which has proved untenable and useless is cleared away.²⁴

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Gerhart Eisler Kommentar, “Nagy Plans Reconciliation of Patriots,” East German Home Service, October 29, 1956, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe October 30, 1956, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 119.

Eisler's conclusion did not provide much specific information about Nagy's plan, focusing instead on general principles behind the Hungarian leader's policies. Indeed, Eisler acknowledged as much at the beginning of the broadcast, noting that, "To get an exact picture of the situation in Hungary, one would have to be in Hungary and talk to people of all walks of life."²⁵ Only then, asserted Eisler, would reporters be able to thoroughly examine events. Later that day, Klaus-Dieter Kroeber presented a nearly identical overview of events. Again, the commentator noted the scarcity of clear information from Hungary.²⁶ While it was certainly true that it was difficult to acquire information about the situation in Budapest, the fact that leaders in Moscow were still unsure of how to proceed must have left communist broadcasters throughout the Eastern Bloc uncertain about how to interpret the actions of the Nagy government.

On November 2, however, East German radio was reporting that Hungarian fascists were moving into the country.²⁷ Deutschlandsender commentator Richard Wolf reported, "Almost without intermission, planes and whole squadrons of aircraft are taking off from Austrian airfields for Budapest." The reporter noted that official reports indicated these planes were transporting medicine. However, Wolf countered this contention, stating, "Observers have become convinced that former officers of the Horthy army and former Hungarian officers of Hitler's Wehrmacht are being channeled in the hundreds from the West, via Austria, to Hungary."²⁸ Furthermore, Radio Free Europe was using its Salzburg transmitters to encourage Hungarians to oppose Nagy's coalition

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Klaus-Dieter Kröber, Report on the situation in Hungary, October 29, 1956, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe October 30, 1956, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 119.

²⁷ Richard Wolf Kommentar, "Hungarian Fascists Move into Country," Deutschlandsender, November 1, 1956, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe November 2, 1956, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 119.

²⁸ Ibid.

government.²⁹ While the Western Allies were not secretly funneling troops into Hungary, the last point about RFE's broadcasts was fairly accurate. RFE broadcasts had consistently taken a decidedly anti-Nagy position since the beginning of the crisis. Its reporters, driven by a maximalist stance that cast all communist leaders with the same brush, failed to see Nagy as anything but a hard-line Soviet pawn.³⁰ Thus, during the final days of October 1956, there existed the odd situation in which Communist media was imploring listeners to support the reformist Nagy whereas the American sponsored RFE was encouraging listeners to continue opposing him.

When the Soviets ordered troops to march into Budapest in order to oust the Nagy government and restore communist rule, GDR stations did not need to explain the conciliatory commentaries about Nagy sent just days earlier. On October 31, British, French, and Israeli forces invaded Egypt in order to reassert control over the Suez Canal, recently nationalized by Egyptian President Nasser. The military action took the world by surprise and turned a great deal of attention away from the events in Hungary.³¹ The GDR's stations immediately turned their attention to condemning the Anglo-French intervention.

Somewhat striking in the Suez Crisis broadcasts was the ambivalent approach to Israel. GDR stations depicted the Jewish state as both an aggressor and a pawn of western imperialists tricked into acting against its own interests. This was indicative of trends in East German political culture from the 1950s. Initially, the Soviet Union and

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 168-171.

³¹ Peter G. Boyle, "The Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis," *History – The Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (October 2005), 550-565.

satellites had supported the creation of the Jewish state.³² At the time, Berliner Rundfunk gave the state its support in broadcasts, as can be seen in a broadcast sent in July of 1948 in which the station blamed the British for playing both the Arabs and Israelis against one another by arming each side.³³ The broadcast claimed that the British and US sought to assert the dominance of Anglo-American capital over the Middle East and were thus allowing their “Arab puppet-kings” to wage a war with the Jewish state while at the same time arming the Israelis with weapons and forcing upon them the costs of the war.³⁴ Berliner Rundfunk did not hesitate to characterize the Egyptians as “aggressors” or deny that their goal was to “annihilate” (“vernichten”) the Jewish state.³⁵ Berliner Rundfunk’s approach was sympathetic to the new state, placing blame for the war on the US and British.

Yet, the changing diplomatic landscape the early 1950s following the creation of both the GDR and the Federal Republic led East Germany to change its approach to Israel. In the era of the West German Hallstein Doctrine (by which the Federal Republic considered any state’s recognition of the GDR to be a hostile act), East Germany had made concerted efforts to open alliances with Arab States currently in a state of war with Israel, including Syria and Egypt, as a means of breaking out of diplomatic isolation.³⁶ Thus, GDR radio’s approach to Israel was largely ambivalent during the Suez Crisis. On October 30, in response to British Prime Minister Anthony Eden’s ultimatum to the Egyptian government, Deutschlandradio declared, “This statement by the British Prime

³² See Yosef Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations, 1953-67: From Confrontation to Disruption* (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998) and Binyamin Pinkus, “Change and Continuity in Soviet Policy Towards Soviet Jewry and Israel, May--December 1948,” *Israel Studies*, Vol. 10 Issue 1, (Spring 2005), 96-123.

³³ Sendemanuskript, “Aussenpolitik Wochenübersicht,” Berliner Rundfunk, July 10, 1948, Peter Schäfer, DRA Potsdam, B 204-02-02/0087.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory*, 190-200.

Minister makes it plain to the whole world that Israel has been instigated by the Western Powers to attack Egypt.”³⁷ Yet, later that day, a Deutschlandsender broadcast sent by Gerhart Leuschner expressed East Germany’s general hostility to the state. Ignoring the fact that Egypt had been in a state of war with Israel since 1948, the Deutschlandsender reporter declared, “In short, the Israeli Government has started war against Egypt without a declaration of war.”³⁸ Leuschner continued, implicating the British, French, and United States as the true architects of the war.

For years U.S. and British monopolists have been selling tanks, aircrafts, and ammunition to Israel; for years these circles have made millions out of this deal. And now other U.S. tanks, other British aircraft made in the same factories and yielding the same profit for their owners, are to move against tanks and aircraft sold to Israel. Was there not a man called Krupp who did equally dirty business in the same dirty way, and is this man not still alive like all the others who do the same?³⁹

Deutschlandsender depicted Israel as a pawn. It was characterized as militant and hostile, but nevertheless, GDR stations depicted it as the object of Western capitalist interests. “Do not these facts indicate that Washington, London, and Paris have known of the intended attack by Israeli troops against Egypt for some days now? And was this attack perhaps not staged from these capitals? Did they therefore not play a downright vile game with Israel as well?”⁴⁰ Leuschner then proceeded to blame the invasion entirely on economic interests, citing a sudden slump in oil shares at the New York Stock Exchange

³⁷ “West Instigated Israeli Attack on Egypt,” Deutschlandsender, October 30, 1956, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe October 31, 1956, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 119.

³⁸ Gerhart Leuschner Kommentar, “Eden’s Hypocrisy,” Deutschlandsender, October 30, 1956, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe, October 31, 1956, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 119.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the day before the invasion. Declared Leuschner, “The whole point at issue is oil and positions of military power.”⁴¹ Thus, the capitalists’ need to create a permanent military presence in the Middle East in order to reassert colonial authority over the region spurred the intervention. Leuschner then closed by declaring, “Our sympathy belongs to the Egyptian and all other Arab peoples.”⁴²

Leuschner’s interpretation of the Suez Crisis grossly mischaracterized the motives of the western powers. For one thing, whereas the British and French aimed to neutralize Nasser’s influence in the Middle East, Israel was still in a state of war with Egypt. Thus, the Suez action had more to do with the Jewish state’s own security than it did with perpetuating Anglo-American economic interests in the Middle East. Furthermore, the United States was not even aware of the operation. When Eisenhower did learn about it, he immediately declared support for the Egyptians and made it clear that the US would not support the Anglo-French invasion.⁴³ Overall, the invasion was a misguided venture, and not a coordinated plan aimed to assert Anglo-American capitalist interests.

The diversion of the world’s attention caused by the Anglo-French-Israeli intervention afforded Khrushchev and the Soviets an opportunity to take a more aggressive stance against Nagy and his government. The resulting Soviet invasion led to the deaths of 20,000 Hungarians and 3,000 Soviet troops.⁴⁴ While it is likely that Moscow would have sent troops into Hungary anyway, the Anglo-French intervention nevertheless permitted Khrushchev a chance to take the moral high ground by condemning both countries as hypocrites. At the same time, he threatened to use nuclear

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Peter L. Hahn, *United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 211.

weapons against both countries if they did not withdraw.⁴⁵ The world's attention was now on Suez. GDR radio stations took advantage of this opportunity, such as when von Schnitzler, in a Deutschlandsender broadcast, accused the west of trying to hide the truth about Suez. 'No more talk about Egypt, all talk about Hungary' has been the Western slogan from the moment the fate of the counterrevolution in Hungary was sealed."⁴⁶ Von Schnitzler proceeded to describe the Soviet invasion as an antifascist action, declaring that the Soviets were, "preventing what we did not prevent in Germany in 1933, what was not prevented in Spain in 1936...."⁴⁷ Von Schnitzler proceeded to praise the new "revolutionary worker-peasant Government" that the Soviets had erected to replace Nagy's regime.

The memory of June 17 also cast a shadow over the broadcasts of SFB and RIAS. For both, the lessons learned from the East German uprising helped shape the approach reporters took to the Hungarian revolt. This was clearest in the reporting of SFB reporter Mathias Walden, who produced the lion's share of SFB commentaries on the Hungarian Revolution during the last week of October and first week of November 1956. Walden had been a member of RIAS and, along with Egon Bahr, had received the East Berlin workers delegation that had requested airtime on the evening of June 16, 1953. Perhaps because of his memories of the failed uprising, Walden's commentaries for SFB were cautious. Missing from these broadcasts (as well as RIAS's broadcasts from foreign correspondent Heinz Frentzel) was the anticipation for success that characterized RIAS's

⁴⁵ Ibid., 173.

⁴⁶ Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler Kommentar, "West Would Divert Attention to Hungary," Deutschlandsender, November 4, 1956, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe November 5, 1956, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 119.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

June 16-17, 1956 broadcasts. A sober, measured approach replaced the triumphal tone and expression of hope of RIAS's broadcasts from three years earlier.

A lengthy report produced by a number of SFB journalists broadcast on October 26, 1956 demonstrates most of the central themes and assertions made by the West Berlin station during the crisis. The report, part of the SFB series, *Zur Politik der Gegenwart* ("On Current Politics"), focused on two broad themes. First, it situated the uprising within the context of the history of the Eastern Bloc and Soviet Union. The first speaker, Peter Bender, argued that the uprising was the worst blow suffered by the Soviets since they occupied Eastern Europe.⁴⁸ The Soviets, Bender contended, were trapped in a desperate situation in which they were forced to defend the deployment of troops to Hungary and at the same time defend the policies of destalinization. Like Poland, Hungary was witnessing a "patriotic revolt." Also, as in Poland, the Hungarians were simply following Moscow's lead. If, as the Soviets contended, the state administration was responsible for provisioning the Hungarian people, and the Hungarian people were not adequately provisioned, then the socialist accomplishments in Hungary were no accomplishments at all. Thus, by the Soviet's own logic, the uprising was justified.⁴⁹ Bender then considered the reactions of the East German and Czechoslovak governments to the uprising, declaring that, "As always, the little Soviets in Pankow and Prague look more Soviet than the Kremlin itself."⁵⁰ Bender then reported that the Czechoslovak government had staged demonstrations condemning the Hungarian uprising. At the same time, the SED newspaper *Neues Deutschland* reminded its readers that the Soviet Union

⁴⁸ "Zur Politik der Gegenwart," SFB October 26, 1956, DRA Potsdam, Schriftgutbestand des SFB, SFB 4390.

⁴⁹ Ibid., "Die Konsequenz daraus hätte nur sein können, dass der Aufstand berechtigt ist."

⁵⁰ Ibid., "Wie immer, gebärdeten sich die kleinen Sowjets in Pankow und Prag sowjetischer als der Kreml selbst."

was the touchstone for all truly progressive individuals.⁵¹ Bender described these assertions from the Czechoslovak and East German governments as cynical and expressions of uncontrolled devotion to Stalinist principles. Bender even cited *Pravda* to demonstrate that *Neues Deutschland's* assertions were incorrect. Although the SED organ had declared on October 25 that order had been restored in Budapest, the October 26 *Pravda* reported that fighters were still operating in the Hungarian capital.⁵²

The second theme of the broadcast, developed by Mathias Walden, was the need for solidarity with the Hungarian people. Here, a certain amount of frustration persisted throughout the report, as Walden bemoaned the lack of international support for the freedom fighters. Amongst western leaders, Walden noted that only President Eisenhower had declared public solidarity with the Hungarians. Praising what he considered Eisenhower's honest assessment, Walden declared, "Despite the thaw and the business of coexistence, he has condemned the intervention of Soviet troops and described their stationing in Hungary as an expression of internal insecurity. His position was less tactical than honest. In this situation, that is good."⁵³ Walden criticized the West German government's response, disparaging a declaration by Adenauer in which he analyzed the uprising yet stopped short of expressing support and solidarity with the Hungarian people. Members of France's and Britain's respective parliaments on the other hand had argued that the issue should be deferred to the United Nations' Security Council. Walden noted this option would not alter the situation, but was the best course of action:

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., "Er hat—trotz Tauwetter und Ko-Existenz-Konjunktur—das Eingreifen der sowjetischen Truppen mißbilligt und deren Stationierung in Ungarn als Ausdruck der Unsicherheit im Inneren bezeichnet. Seine Stellungnahme war weniger taktisch als ehrlich. In diesem Falle ist das gut."

Because of the Soviet veto, one cannot expect the Security Council to alter either the situation or prevent the Soviet intervention in Hungary. But the deployment of Soviet battalions against the freedom loving men and farmers could be attacked and judged before the world forum. Such a plea from the world for the rights of that struggling population would surely be the appropriate answer to the Soviet address.

Walden went on to note that all Germans, especially since June 17, should feel a sense of solidarity with all men “who risked their bodies and lives for freedom.”⁵⁴ He closed by stressing the grave situation the Hungarians faced as Soviet troops entered the country. The Hungarian freedom fighters were willing to give up their lives. Such a fact needed to be acknowledged with sympathy, and not cold analysis.

Both Walden and Bender’s commentary situated the uprising within the context of destalinization. At the same time, the shadow of June 17 could be felt, especially in Walden’s portion of the commentary. His expression of frustration with the West German government’s failure to express solidarity with the Hungarian people was akin to Egon Bahr’s comments about the isolation of the East German people during the 1953 uprising there. At the same time, a feeling of futility permeated Walden’s portion as he was forced to acknowledge that there was little that could be done to stop the Soviets. Thus, all that was left was a firm resolve to support the people of the invaded state. Missing here was the triumphant language of Eberhard Schütz’s June 16 commentary on the demonstrations in Berlin in 1953. Tellingly, neither Walden nor Bender suggested that the revolt would succeed.

⁵⁴ Ibid. “Gerade in Deutschland sollte—spätestens seit dem 17. Juni—eine natürliche, reaktionssichere Solidarität mit allen Menschen wach sein, die Leib und Leben für die Freiheit riskieren.”

Yet, as events in Hungary progressed, the possibility emerged that the revolution would achieve some kind of success. As the national communist Imre Nagy was appointed Prime Minister on October 28, it seemed likely that a partial reform akin to what had occurred in Poland just weeks earlier was possible. This new hope could be heard in Walden's commentaries. On October 31, news was received from Hungarian radio that Soviet troops were withdrawing from Budapest. The official Soviet position was that this action was being taken to preserve security in the city. Walden discounted this explanation, noting in a commentary from that evening that, "The language of reality would leave hardly any room and time for the formulation of a triumph, especially when the stamped and sealed confirmation of the intense hatred for the Soviets reaches Moscow."⁵⁵ Those loyal to the regime had gone into hiding. The old Hungarian parties were reconstituting themselves. Walden declared that a new, democratic life was coming to pass. Yet, he was careful not to declare a complete victory for the Hungarian revolutionaries. "But it is too early to speak of an absolute victory for the people. As long as Soviet troops continue to reside in Hungary, the basic requirements for the country's freedom have not been fulfilled."⁵⁶ Yet, Walden believed that Moscow was not interested in using further violence to suppress the revolt.

On November 2, Walden sent a similar broadcast. However, this time, the uncertainty of the Soviet's next course of action was a source of concern. Walden reiterated the accomplishments of the revolutionaries, noting that they had reconstituted

⁵⁵ Mathias Walden Kommentar, SFB October 31, 1956, DRA Potsdam, SFB Depositium, SFB 4390. "Die Sprache der Realität lässt kaum Raum und Zeit für eine Formulierung des Triumphes, der sich einstellt, wenn aus der sowjetischen Machtzentrale die gestempelte und gesiegelte Bestätigung kommt, dass der Haß gegen die Sowjetis selbsts in Moskau zur Kenntnis genommen und auch begriffen worden ist."

⁵⁶ Ibid. "Aber es ist dennoch zu früh vom absoluten Sieg des Volkes zu sprechen. Solange sich in Ungarn noch sowjetische Truppen aufhalten, ist die Grundbedingungen für die Freiheit des Landes nicht erfüllt."

democratic parties and laid the foundations for a liberal democratic order in Hungary.⁵⁷ Moscow was isolated, and would soon be forced to defend itself before the United Nations. Then, Walden believed, the justification for maintaining a military presence in Hungary would be proven hollow. Furthermore, there were unlikely any Soviet allies left in positions of authority in Hungary. As Walden declared, “In the Hungarian government, there apparently appears to be no single man who can receive Soviet orders.”⁵⁸ Nagy’s government had worked to fulfill the demands of the Hungarian people and had begun the process of severing Budapest’s ties with Moscow and the Warsaw Pact. The prospect that the Soviets would attempt to suppress this government was, in Walden’s opinion, unlikely. “Thus, the Soviet’s path back to power must proceed from the collapse of this government, which it had initially respected and supported—and it must proceed through an armed extermination of the resistance, which in these circumstances would mean an inconceivable bloodbath.”⁵⁹

In the end, Walden remained uncertain about what the Soviet’s actions would be. Indeed, he surmised that it was likely the Soviets themselves were uncertain of what action to take. This was not entirely unfounded. Just weeks earlier, the Soviets had allowed Gomulka’s reform communist regime to remain in power in Poland, a state that was of greater importance to the Soviet bloc than Hungary.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the Soviet Presidium had agreed on October 30 not to intervene in Hungary. Although this decision

⁵⁷ Mathias Walden Kommentar, SFB, November 2, 1956, DRA Potsdam, SFB Depositum 4390/1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., “Es gibt in der ungarischen Regierung offenbar keinen einzigen Mann, der als Empfänger sowjetischer (sic) Befehle auftreten könnte.”

⁵⁹ Ibid., “Der Rückweg zur Macht in Ungarn müsste also für die Sowjets über den Sturz dieser Regierung führen, die sie selbst anfänglich respektiert und gestützt hatten—und er müsste in einer bewaffneten Ausrottung des Widerstandes münden, die nach den gegebenen.”

⁶⁰ Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 211.

was immediately reversed the next day, it was made with a great deal of hesitation on the part of the Soviets and their allies.⁶¹

Perhaps because his broadcasts were so confident that the Soviets would not risk violence in order to suppress the Hungarian uprising, he was particularly shocked and dismayed by the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt. He opened his November 2 broadcast by citing an article from the *Manchester Guardian* which declared that France and England's actions had condemned Hungary's quest for freedom.⁶² For years, Walden told his listeners, morale had been low and hope nonexistent behind the Iron Curtain. Calls for freedom in Eastern Europe had grown weaker and weaker with the passage of time. The Hungarian uprising was thus a seminal moment, an event that all seeking freedom in Eastern Europe had been waiting for. Furthermore, it was a moment that would test the moral fortitude of the West. However, as Walden declared, "Instead, France and England abandoned their place as custodians of this moral fortitude and instead jumped onto the political roulette table."⁶³ Walden condemned the Anglo-French attack as, "the life preserver" for the Soviet's Hungarian policy.⁶⁴ There could be no doubt, in Walden's estimation that the Anglo-French action would provide the Soviets with the opportunity to crush the Nagy government and reassert Communist control. The stakes for the Soviets were high: allowing Hungary's decision to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact to stand unopposed would mean the beginning of the end of the Eastern Bloc. Yet, the British and French had provided the Soviets with the opportunity they needed to stop the uprising. Walden closed his evening broadcast with a sharp critique of

⁶¹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 211.

⁶² Mathias Walden Kommentar, SFB November 2, 1956, DRA Potsdam SFB Depositum, SFB 4390/1.

⁶³ Ibid., "Stattdessen verließen Frankreich und England ihre Plätze als Hüter dieser Moral und stürzten an den politischen Roulette-Tisch."

⁶⁴ Ibid. "Denn der Angriff auf Ägypten ist für den Schiffbruch der sowjetischen Politik wie eine Schwimm-Weste—keine Rettung, aber ein Mittel, zunächst über Wasser zu bleiben."

both Britain and France: “The triumph of the Communist’s propaganda is primarily predicated on a deep dismay with the free west since the bombs fell on Egypt.”⁶⁵

A day after the Soviet’s invaded Hungary on November 4, Walden gave an evening commentary describing the consequences of the intervention. The majority of the commentary focused on the experiences of Hungarian refugees interviewed at the Traiskirchen refugee camp in Austria. Throughout, Walden made an effort to cast a thoroughly unsentimental picture of the Hungarian freedom fighters. He opened with a stark image of the refugees:

I have seen and spoken with the Hungarian freedom fighters. Freedom fighters, who, behind the gates of a refugee camp, are not fanatics standing in heroic poses, but simply men and woman of this unfortunate nation. Farmers, young miners, weeping mothers with screaming children, young people who continue to wear armbands and little, tattered ribbons with the Hungarian national colors. Poorly dressed, sunken-cheeked, and exhausted, they came over the border yesterday and during the previous night, a border that has been closed since this morning.⁶⁶

Walden then spoke of the invasion and how it surprised Hungarians and observers alike. In a graphic metaphor, he likened Hungary to a blister that had suddenly been punctured by Soviet tanks. Reporting on his conversations with the refugees, Walden repeatedly returned to the issue of western aid and intervention. In all of his conversations, he reported, he was inevitably asked why the Hungarians were forced to face the Soviets

⁶⁵ Ibid., “Der Triumph der kommunistischen Propaganda gründet sich, seit Bomben auf Ägypten fallen, zum erstenmal auf eine tiefe Betroffenheit des freien Westens.”

⁶⁶ Mathias Walden Kommentar, SFB November 4, 1956, DRA Potsdam, SFB Depositum, SFB 4390/1. “Ich habe ungarische Freiheitskämpfer gesehen und mit ihnen gesprochen, Freiheitskämpfer hinter dem Gatter eines Flüchtlingslagers, keine Fanatiker in Heldenposen, sondern Männer und Frauen dieses unglücklichen Volkes, Bauern, junge Bergarbeiter, weinende Mütter mit schreienden Kindern, junge Leute, die noch Armbinden und klein zerschlossene Schleifen mit den ungarischen Nationalfarben tragen, ärmlich gekleidet, hohlwangig und übermüdet, so, wie sie gestern oder erst in der vergangenen Nacht herübergekommen sind über die Grenze, die seit dem Morgen fast hermetische verriegelt ist.”

alone. Walden also told listeners about the rumors of US intervention. Although he did not specifically mention the origin of these rumors, it is certain that many of them were spread by RFE's broadcasts. As Walden noted, "However, as you have surely heard, the myth spread about Budapest yesterday that in two hours the Americans would come. That was indeed the most illusory, yet understandable, hope. The thought of aid came from this direction. The Americans. Not from the United Nations, not from diplomatic considerations, and surely not from the English or the French."⁶⁷ He continued by addressing the problems posed by nuclear weapons. Perhaps recalling the concerns of his former RIAS chiefs in June of 1953, Walden noted that whenever observers, statesmen, and journalists considered the question of US intervention, the fear of starting World War III and atomic war was always brought up. Yet, at the same, the events in Hungary had made diplomats' claim that nuclear weapons helped prevent war dubious. Due to the fear of nuclear war, the Soviets were able to inflict its "medieval barbarity" upon the Hungarian people.⁶⁸ The Soviet Union could use its armed forces throughout the Eastern Bloc without fear or reprisal from the west. Referring to the 1955 Geneva summit, Walden claimed that, "The entire diplomatic repertoire which has ruled the world stage since the summer of Geneva, has been rendered useless by the events in Hungary."⁶⁹ The Soviets had nothing to fear from the west and were able to pursue a "politics of illusion" before the world at the United Nations. Thus, the people of Hungary were victims of

⁶⁷ Ibid., "Aber wie Sie gewiß gehört haben, ging gestern in Budapest das Gerücht um, in 2 Stunden kämen die Amerikaner. Das war die zwar illusionistische, aber doch verständliche Hoffnung. In dieser Richtung bewegten sich die Vorstellungen vom Begriffe Hilfe. Die Amerikaner: nicht von den Vereinten Nationen spricht das einfache Volk, nicht von diplomatischen Erwägungen über den Fall Ungarn, und schon gar nicht von Engländern oder Franzosen."

⁶⁸ Ibid., "...der mittelalterlichen Grausamkeit."

⁶⁹ Ibid., "Das ganze diplomatische Repertoire, das seit dem Genfer Sommer die Bühne der Welt beherrscht, ist mit dem Fall Ungarn unbrauchbar geworden."

both Soviet aggression and the inability and unwillingness of the western and non-aligned world to intervene.

The overriding tone of Walden's broadcasts was similar to the RIAS broadcasts sent after the June 17 uprising. An ambivalence and disillusion pervaded throughout. Like Bahr and Schütz in 1953, Walden was fully aware that an American intervention would likely provoke a larger scale war that would likely be fought with nuclear weapons. Yet, Walden continued to express a deep frustration with the fact that there was little Eastern Europe (including East Germany) could do against the Soviets. The entire Eastern Bloc was at the mercy of the USSR. At the same time, Walden looked at the west with ambivalence. The only arena in which the Soviets could be challenged was the arena of world opinion. Thus, he praised the United States for its moral support of the uprising. However, the Anglo-French intervention in Egypt had shattered the image of a united western bloc that could claim moral superiority over the Soviets. By launching an imperialist intervention, Britain and France not only turned a blind eye to the events in Hungary, but had also given up any moral standing that the west could bring to bear against the Soviets.

RIAS's broadcasts were similar, focusing on the same basic issues and following the same basic path from reservation to optimism to condemnation that Walden's SFB commentaries took. As in Walden's commentaries, the shadow of June 17, 1953 loomed over Heinz Frentzel's broadcasts. In his broadcast from October 25, Frentzel drew a long line of continuity from June 17 through the June 28 uprisings in Poland through to the Hungarian revolt. As with those events, the uprising in Hungary presented a choice

between freedom and self-rule or renewed dependence on Moscow.⁷⁰ Like Walden, however, Frentzel was also fairly optimistic that Hungary would not revert to Stalinism, despite the continued presence of Soviet troops in the country. He was uncertain about both Nagy and the national communists in Hungary. For Frentzel, the central quandary for Hungary lay in the tension between orthodox Stalinists and the growing movement of national communists. Although the latter were acceptable to Moscow, the popular uprising meant that they would be unable to govern the country without Soviet forces. As Frentzel noted, “The National Communists want to be independent from and be equal to Moscow. The presence of Soviet troops hinders them on this account. But without these troops, they would have lost power during the past forty-eight dramatic hours.”⁷¹ Accepting the national communists, in Frentzel’s estimation, meant continued dependence on Moscow.

Frentzel’s observations were marked by uncertainty. It was difficult to determine, Frentzel frankly stated, where the events in Hungary would lead. In addition, it was difficult to determine what effect the uprising would have throughout the rest of the Eastern Bloc in states such as Czechoslovakia and Romania, where Stalinists continued to govern. By October 31, however, RIAS was sharing SFB’s optimistic outlook. In his commentary from that day, Frentzel declared, “Disoriented and dejected, the Soviet divisions are being withdrawn from Budapest. The insurgents have achieved more than

⁷⁰ Heinz Frentzel, “Der Abendkommentar,” RIAS October 25, 1956, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B304-01-00/0010.

⁷¹ Ibid., “Die Nationalkommunisten wollen unabhängig von und gleichberechtigt mit Moskau sein. Die Anwesenheit sowjetischer Truppen hindert sie daran. Aber ohne diese Truppen wären sie in den dramatischen letzten achtundvierzig Stunden verloren gewesen.”

they themselves dared hope for at the beginning of their revolt.”⁷² However, a greater sense of optimism pervaded Frentzel’s commentary when compared to SFB’s. Whereas Walden remained uncertain about which direction the Soviets would take at this point in the revolt, Frentzel was firm in his belief that the Soviets had chosen a policy of peaceful coexistence and strong antistalinism. For the Soviets, the political repercussions of using force to suppress the revolt were “incalculable.”⁷³ According to Frentzel, the Soviets had only one choice. “The Soviet leaders, or those men amongst the Soviet leaders who are specifying the direction of Soviet policy, have chosen the second option. They have done this perhaps because they believe it is the only policy which still has a future on a world scale.”⁷⁴ The Soviets had sanctioned the Hungarian uprising, and consequently, the principle that all states within the socialist camp were equal and could manage their domestic affairs without interference from Moscow. Frentzel also criticized those who believed in peaceful coexistence, noting that the events in Hungary and the revolutionary will of the Hungarian people had brought this principle into question. As he noted at the close of the broadcast, he expressed hope that the Soviets would come to the realization that they could not force the Hungarian people to remain within the Soviet bloc against their will. “We hope, in spite of everything, that a better awareness is reflected, namely the awareness, that against the hatred and bitterness of an entire people, a competitive coexistence is an antithesis to itself and cannot succeed.”⁷⁵ Thus, like Walden, Frentzel

⁷² Heinz Frentzel, “SU Regierungserklärung Bezüglich zu sozialistische Staaten,” RIAS October 31, 1956, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0010. “Verwirrt und deprimiert sind die sowjetischen Divisionen aus Budapest abgezogen, die Aufständischen haben mehr erreicht, als sie selbst wohl zu Beginn ihre Erhebung zu erhoffen wagten.”

⁷³ Ibid. “unabsehbar.”

⁷⁴ Ibid. Die Sowjetführung oder die Männer in der Sowjetführung die jetzt dort die Richtung angeben, haben den zweiten Weg gewählt, wahrscheinlich weil sie das für die einzige Politik halten, die im Weltmaßstab heute noch eine Zukunft hat.”

⁷⁵ Ibid., “Hoffen wir, dass sich in alledem eine bessere Erkenntnis widerspiegelt, die Erkenntnis nämlich, dass gegen den Hass und die Erbitterung ganzer Völker eine wettberwerbliche Ko-Existenz ein Widerspruch in sich ist und nicht erfolgreich sein kann.”

approached the Soviet leadership as logical, reasonable individuals who did not wish to see bloodshed. Here, both surmised, the currents of destalinization meant that Khrushchev would avoid utilizing force against the Hungarians.

Like Walden, Frentzel condemned the Anglo-French intervention in Egypt. On November 7, he noted, “The pain and disgust that has ensued as a consequence of the Soviet’s barbarism in Hungary is now mixed with concern about the consequences of the British and French attack against Egypt.”⁷⁶ The United States, Frentzel argued, was the only one of the great powers that was acting responsibly. He also condemned the Soviet’s offer to mediate the crisis in the Sinai, describing the proposal as “unparalleled in its cynicism.”⁷⁷ The Soviets were exploiting the “tragically mistaken decisions” of the British and the French governments for its own purposes. As with SFB, Frentzel saw a critical link between the Anglo-French Egyptian intervention and the Soviet’s repression in Hungary. The Soviet Union’s public protests against Britain and France allowed it to divert attention from its own intervention in Hungary. Thus, it was exploiting all of the diplomatic tools it could muster at the United Nations. The British and French had given the Soviets the opportunity to present themselves as a bulwark against western imperialism.⁷⁸

Although SFB was a German public institution funded by the West Berlin government and RIAS was an American funded operation, there is a striking synergy between their reports on the Hungarian uprising and Suez crisis. Both their principle

⁷⁶ Heinz Frentzel, “Suez--Waffenruhe,” RIAS November 7, 1956, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0010. “In den Schmerz und in die Empörung über die sowjetische Barbarei in Ungarn mischt sich nun Besorgnis über die Folgen des britisch-französischen Angriffs auf Ägypten.”

⁷⁷ Ibid., “Es war ein beispielloser Zynismus, der die Sowjets gestern abend bewog, sich als bewaffnete Friedenstifter im Nahen Osten anzubieten.”

⁷⁸ Heinz Frentzel, “Sowjetunion internationale Position und Ungarn,” RIAS November 20, 1956, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0010.

foreign correspondents, SFB's Mathias Walden and RIAS's Heinz Frentzel, initially approached the uprising with skepticism, only to turn to optimism at the end of October when it appeared the Soviet Union would support the Nagy government. Consequently, the Soviet's decision to use force to crush the revolution at the beginning of November elicited outrage from both broadcasters. The Anglo-French intervention in Suez was also strongly condemned. By turning world attention from Hungary to Egypt, the British and French had given the Soviets an opening to suppress the revolt and at the same time act as the defender of the third world and opponent of western imperialism. Unlike stations in the GDR, neither SFB nor RIAS considered Israel's involvement. The focus was on France, Britain, and the consequences their action had for Hungary.

An SFB broadcast produced by Richard Löwenthal and sent on November 28, 1956 provides a sober coda to the tumultuous events of the previous two months. Entitled a "Changed World," Löwenthal noted that the events in Hungary and Suez had brought about a dramatic change in world affairs and a fundamental change in political thinking.⁷⁹ The Soviet Union's control over the Eastern Bloc had been shaken and the effectiveness of the Warsaw Pact devalued. At the same time, the Suez Crisis had shown deep fissures in the Western Alliance and had proven to be the greatest crisis to Anglo-American relations since the end of World War II. Both Hungary and Poland had demonstrated strong revolutionary potential. Yet, at the same time, the Soviets had reverted to Stalinist methods over control and dominance. Britain and France had isolated themselves throughout the world, and Britain's standing in Asia and amongst the Commonwealth had been greatly damaged. At the same time, the United States' prestige in the Middle East had risen, due to its open and strong opposition to the Anglo-French

⁷⁹ Richard Löwenthal, "Eine veraenderte Welt," AdSD, NI Richard Löwenthal 397, SFB 1954-1958.

intervention. As Löwenthal observed, “In both Egypt and Hungary we have seen attempts to revert back to brutal power politics—admittedly with very different results. Yet, the United Nations and its moral pressure played a critical role in a way it never before has since its creation. It is a picture that is thrilling as much as it is bewildering.”⁸⁰ It was clear to Löwenthal that a fundamental change in world affairs had occurred. The very assumptions that guided the western alliance and eastern bloc had been shaken and transformed.

1961: The Refugee Crisis and the Construction of the Berlin Wall: East German Radio

For the reporters at RIAS and SFB, the events of 1956 had reinforced the lessons learned from the June 17, 1953 uprising. With each passing year, a prompt resolution to the Cold War (and with German reunification) was becoming more and more unlikely. Between 1958 and 1961, the lack of resolution reached a crisis level, especially with regards to the status of Berlin. The constant flow of East German fleeing to the Federal Republic was dramatically threatening the economic viability of the German Democratic Republic. As long as the border between East and West Berlin remained open, citizens of the GDR were permitted free and open transit between the two Germanys. Thousands of East Germans took advantage of this opportunity and chose to remain in the Federal Republic. The numbers were staggering. Between 1949 and 1960, about three and a half million East Germans had fled the GDR for West Germany.⁸¹ By the late 1950s, the

⁸⁰ Ibid., “Sowohl in Aegypten wie in Ungarn haben wir Versuche einer Rueckkehr zu brutaler Machtpolitik erlebt—freilich mit sehr verschiedenem Erfolg—doch in den dadurch ausgelosten Krisen haben die Vereinten Nationen und ihr moralischer Druck eine zentraler Rolle gespielt, als jemals zuvor seit ihrer Gruendung. Es ist ein ebenso aufregendes wie verwirrendes Bild.”

⁸¹ Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 195.

emigration rate had steadily increased. The open border between East and West Berlin had become a debilitating ulcer for the German Democratic Republic. As long as it existed, the flow of refugees from the GDR could persist unimpeded. That the majority of refugees were young, skilled workers also meant that the GDR was suffering an incapacitating drain on resources that could not be easily replaced. The viability of the Soviet backed German state was tied directly to the open border.

To confront this problem, both Khrushchev and SED chief Walter Ulbricht pursued a number of measures. Between 1960 and 1961, the East German leader consistently pressured the Kremlin chief to take decisive action to settle the Berlin problem.⁸² Khrushchev, reluctant to disrupt the status quo but aware that the repercussions of East Germany's collapse could be dire for the Soviets, responded by renewing a 1958 ultimatum to the western powers that demanded they leave West Berlin and recognize it as a free and open city. If they did not withdraw, the Soviet Union would unilaterally sign a peace treaty with the GDR and place West Berlin under the authority of the East German government.⁸³ In order to understand the often complex diplomatic posturing that occurred between 1958 and 1961 between the Soviets, East Germans, West Germans, and Western Allies, it is important to recognize the fact that the division of Germany and ambiguous status of Berlin were issues that had been left unresolved since the end of World War II. No peace treaty had been signed between the four powers and Germany. Neither the GDR nor the Federal Republic of Germany acknowledged the other state as a legitimate representative of the German people. Furthermore, the four powers occupying Berlin (the United States, Soviet Union, France,

⁸² See Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, for a good overview of the dynamics of the Khrushchev-Ulbricht relationship.

⁸³ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 143-151 and Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 139-233.

and Great Britain) all upheld, in principle, the position that Berlin was a city under a joint occupation. Thus, Khrushchev's threat to sign a separate peace treaty with the GDR was an explicit threat to the western powers' position in West Berlin. The GDR, which had claimed all of Berlin was its capital, would thus be in a position to expel the Western Allies from the western sectors of the city.⁸⁴

The Kennedy Administration responded with a firm declaration that the United States would not, under any circumstances, relinquish its access rights to West Berlin, even if it meant a nuclear confrontation. Unwilling to risk nuclear war over the city, but nevertheless aware that a solution over Berlin needed to be reached, Khrushchev permitted Ulbricht to carry out what the SED chief had wanted to do since 1960: seal the border. On August 13, 1961, the GDR official closed off the border between East and West Berlin with the construction of an "anti-fascist protective wall."⁸⁵ Both Kennedy and Khrushchev, relieved that the situation seemed to have been resolved without sparking open war between the super powers, were content with the wall. As draconian as the solution was, it was acceptable to both leaders. As Kennedy noted, "It's not a very nice solution, but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war."⁸⁶

The major narratives and principles that had guided how RIAS, SFB, Deutschlandsender, and Berliner Rundfunk presented news for the past decade shaped how they confronted the refugee crisis and the construction of the Berlin Wall. Both the East German stations Deutschlandsender and Berliner Rundfunk justified the wall as a

⁸⁴ For analysis of the Berlin Crisis of 1958-1961, see Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, Chapter Seven, Robert Slusser, "The Berlin Crisis of 1958-59 and 1961," in *Force without War*, ed. Barry Blechman et al (Washington DC: Brookings, 1978), Jack Schick, *The Berlin Crisis, 1958-1962* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), and Michael Beschloss, *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960-1961* (New York: HarperCollins 1991).

⁸⁵ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 93.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Beschloss, *The Crisis Years*, 278.

defensive measure. Just as jamming towers had created a metaphorical barrier against the west's subversive messages around East Germany's airwaves, so the Berlin Wall was to be a physical barrier against US espionage actions. Both RIAS and SFB on the other hand greeted the wall with outrage. Despite the fact that rumors had persisted throughout Berlin regarding the closure of the border, the stations' reporters nevertheless reacted to the wall with shock and indignation. For them, the Wall was yet more proof that Germany was a powerless pawn of the superpower struggle. Unable to assert their own interests, Germans were forced to watch as the Soviets and SED created a physical manifestation of their country's division.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the East German refugee crisis had been a topic of concern in many GDR radio broadcasts. The stations approached the issue of "Republikflucht" ("Flight from the Republic") in a number of ways. In some cases, such as in a broadcast from March 15, 1956, the GDR denied there was a problem in the first place. The commentary of the day by Theodore Schulze-Walden simply accused the West of exaggerating the problem as a means of destabilizing the GDR.⁸⁷ Such statements ignored the fact that over a quarter of a million East Germans had fled the GDR in 1956 alone. That year, 316,000 East Germans fled, following 270,115 in 1955, 173,279 in 1954, and 270,440 in 1953.⁸⁸ Such numbers meant that denying the refugee problem was simply not possible. In response, GDR radio blamed RIAS and other western media for tricking individuals into fleeing the GDR. Thus, the refugee problem was strongly linked to the American station. The SED accused RIAS of casting a sentimental, unrealistic picture of life in West Germany. This concept, so prevalent in

⁸⁷ Theodor Schulze-Walden, "Kommentar des Tages," Berliner Rundfunk, March 15, 1956, DRA Potsdam, B095-00-0112/0105.

⁸⁸ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 72.

pamphlets, posters, and cartoons produced by the GDR, was also a central component of radio broadcasts. The GDR government thus aimed to target the very popularity of the station by noting that the most appealing news it broadcast, namely reports about the freedom and prosperity in West Germany, was nothing but lies. GDR stations accused RIAS of covering up the cruel reality of life in the West. This is well illustrated in a broadcast made by Karl-Heinz Gerstner in 1954 entitled, “Umsiedler aus dem Westen” (“Repatriated From the West”). Through the course of the commentary, Gerstner sought to discount the attractiveness of fleeing to West Berlin and West Germany. The majority of those fleeing, he contended, were criminals. Thus, he consigned those contemplating flight to the margins of society.⁸⁹ An unfortunate number of these individuals had fallen for the illusions of the “golden west” being created by RIAS. Upon arriving in the west, the majority discovered that they had been deceived. Expecting prosperity, they instead faced job insecurity, poverty, and resurgent militarism. In contrast, Gerstner contended, some 10,000 citizens of the Federal Republic had returned to the GDR in 1954. Workers coming to the GDR expressed hatred of the West and were thankful that they did not have to fear for their jobs. Considering other grounds for emigration and remigration to the GDR, Gerstner expressed a subtle acknowledgment that the material conditions in the Federal Republic were superior. “But it is not so much the material side of life that they continuously underlined once again being thankful for, but rather the moral side of life in our state.”⁹⁰ In West Germany, one cared only about money, whereas in the GDR, one felt a deeper sense of meaning as they worked to build a peaceful Germany. Gerstner

⁸⁹ Sendemanuskripte, “Umsiedler aus dem Westen,” Programm I und II, November 26, 1954, Karl Heinz Gerstner, DRA Potsdam, Historisches Archiv, Bestand Hörfunk, B095-00-01/0004 Titel 0061.

⁹⁰ Ibid. “Aber es war gar nicht so sehr die materielle Seite des Lebens heisst, die sie immer wieder dankbar unterstrichen, sondern die moralische Seite des Lebens unserem Staat.”

continued to question RIAS's contentions by accusing the station of spreading the false impression that, should a refugee return to the GDR, they would be incarcerated. This would not happen, the commentator affirmed, and noted that refugees and workers alike were welcome to help build a peaceful Germany in the GDR.⁹¹

GDR radio did not attempt to argue that material conditions in East Germany were necessarily better. Instead, the focus was on the moral imperative of living in a progressive state that abhorred militarism and did not exploit its workers. West Germany and the United States were war-mongering states dedicated to destroying the GDR. Consequently, those who fled the GDR were not simply individuals seeking a better life, but criminals easily deceived into leaving for West Germany. The decision to leave East Germany was consequently a political and moral act, not an economic one.

Throughout the winter and spring of 1961, Ulbricht consistently pressured Khrushchev to sponsor some kind of radical solution to the problem. Two solutions existed. The first was to threaten French, American, and British access rights to West Berlin and place the three western sectors under East German sovereignty. The second entailed sealing the border between East and West Berlin. Critically, the latter solution was less risky, as Kennedy had affirmed during his meeting with Khrushchev at Vienna on June 3-4, 1961 that the US would only act if its own access rights to West Berlin were threatened.⁹² Khrushchev nevertheless repeated his 1958 demand that the Western Allies withdraw from the city. GDR's broadcasters subsequently promoted this solution.

GDR stations characterized western critics of Khrushchev's ultimatum as unreasonable and simply unwilling to face reality. Furthermore, their stubborn insistence

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*,

on maintaining the status quo (namely, the US decision to defend its access rights to West Berlin) was depicted by GDR stations as a dangerous act of brinkmanship. GDR stations cast the leaders of the Soviet Union and East Germany as reasonable and moderate in their demands. The US on the other hand was irrational and dangerous. For example, on June 5, 1961, Theodor Schulz-Walden declared in a Deutschlandsender broadcast that the signing of a peace treaty was the only rational solution. However, he asserted, the West German government had consistently rebuffed the East German and Soviet attempts to reach a settlement. Once again claiming that West Germany was the successor to Hitler's Third Reich, Schulz-Walden argued that, "All these suggestions were in vain. Bonn rejected them all, because the Bonn militarists regarded Hitler's capitulation only as a temporary state of affairs until the outcome of 1945 could be 'corrected.' This is why no peace treaty has been signed in all these years."⁹³ If a treaty could not be concluded between the two Germanys, Eisler concluded, then one needed to be drawn up between East Germany and the Soviets. However, the US was making efforts to disrupt these efforts. Once again invoking the specter of the Nazi past, Schulze-Walden compared NATO plans and exercises to the Nazi's plans to invade the Soviet Union. Regarding the publication of a NATO plan for an offensive against the GDR, Schulze-Walden noted, "By way of an excuse it was stated that it was merely a kind of general staff exercise like many others. At the time the Barbarossa plan was only a dangerous exercise, but it became a horrible reality during the attack on the USSR 20 years ago."⁹⁴ The twentieth anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union was incidentally only days away.

⁹³ Theodor Schulze-Walden Kommentar, Deutschlandsender, June 5, 1961, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe June 6, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Thus, although it was Khrushchev (with Ulbricht's prodding) who had delivered the ultimatum demanding an immediate resolution to the Berlin problem and an end to the status quo, GDR radio depicted the United States as the militant power threatening stability. It was the new fascist regime preparing a second Operation Barbarossa. Schulze-Walden reiterated these ideas on June 16, 1961, once again asserting that a peace treaty was necessary if West Germany's plans of conquest were to be defeated. Schulze-Walden declared:

As long as the militarists on the Rhine can continue this game unhampered, every German is threatened with the danger of an incident that might start a nuclear war. It is this mortal danger that the peace treaty is to avert once and for all, by insuring that no war can ever again be launched from German soil or waged thereon. Therefore, the problem of the peace treaty today is the problem of problems, the central problem, on the solution of which everything else hinges.⁹⁵

Schulze-Walden again reasserted the imperative for the treaty. It needed to be concluded immediately. The choice presented to the German people was between war and peace. Thus, just as it had during the First Berlin Crisis of 1948-1949, GDR radio situated the debate as a choice between war and peace. If the US and West Germany opposed the treaty, then they were, by consequence, for war. Interestingly, the broadcasts focused their criticism not on the United States, but on West Germany and Konrad Adenauer.

Broadcasts presenting these arguments continued throughout June and July of 1961. On June 25, just four days after the twentieth anniversary of Operation Barbarossa,

⁹⁵ Theodor Schulze-Walden Kommentar, Deutschlandsender, June 17, 1961, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe June 17, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127.

Gerhart Eisler once again linked the treaty to the need for peace. As with Schulze-Walden's broadcasts, Eisler invoked the image of German troops launching a war as a necessary incentive to producing a treaty. "The peace treaty should also lay down the principle of Germany's military neutrality, a neutrality expressly acknowledged by all the powers who were at war with Hitlerite Germany. Military neutrality on the part of Germany means that never again will a war be unleashed from Germany and that no county in the world has the right to drag Germany into a foreign war."⁹⁶ Although Eisler did not specifically note a specific country that could, "drag Germany into a foreign war," it is certain he was attempting to implicitly invoke the United States and the NATO alliance. In July, Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler presented another broadcast stressing the need for an immediate solution. Once again, much of the focus was on West Germany's leaders. "Konrad Adenauer and [West Berlin Mayor] Willy Brandt want everything to remain as it is in West Berlin. They seriously believe that things in West Berlin can go on as they are..."⁹⁷ However, the United States was uninterested in subscribing to the war demands of the West German leaders. Thus, interestingly, von Schnitzler depicted Adenauer and Brandt as the warmongers. He characterized Kennedy as reasonable and unwilling to support Bonn's plans for war. Americans demanding a stronger stand against the GDR were not aligned with Kennedy, but were old supporters of John Foster Dulles and his militant policies. Thus, throughout the broadcast, von Schnitzler depicted Kennedy as reasonable and unwilling to risk war over the Berlin problem. In contrast, Adenauer and Brandt sought to use the Berlin issue as an excuse to wage war against the

⁹⁶ Gerhart Eisler, Commentary, Deutschlandsender, June 25, 1961, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe June 26, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127.

⁹⁷ Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler Kommentar, Deutschlandsender, July 8, 1961, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe July 10, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127.

GDR. Von Schnitzler concluded that, “There is a swelling chorus of voices of reason and perception in all Western countries, even in West Germany. It proves that Bonn and Schoeneberg increasingly isolate themselves with their extremist, unintelligent attitude.”⁹⁸

Von Schnitzler’s broadcast is interesting for the manner in which focused its criticism on West Germany. Throughout, von Schnitzler argued that the transformation of West Berlin into a free city was the best solution. Yet, despite the fact that this solution was the one that would threaten American interests in the city (as opposed to sealing the East Berlin border), von Schnitzler goes out of his way not to implicate the Kennedy administration as the chief obstacles to peace. The dispute, von Schnitzler and his colleagues contended, was between East and West Germany and not between East Germany and the United States.

This distinction was not minor. Neither Kennedy nor Khrushchev wished to see a war break out over Berlin.⁹⁹ Yet, at the same time, neither wished to see their position in the city weakened. By transferring the focus of East German hostilities to Adenauer and West Germany, GDR broadcasters (and with them, most likely the SED and Ulbricht) were indicating that East Germany was welcome to a solution that did not involve threatening the US position in West Berlin. Thus, although von Schnitzler demanded that a peace treaty needed to be signed and the ambiguous situation in Berlin resolved, his focus on West Germany could have been interpreted by listeners as an indication that Ulbricht was welcome to a solution that did not threaten the US position.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Beschloss, *The Crisis Years*.

It is also important to bear in mind that Ulbricht and Khrushchev had agreed in early July that the border between East and West Berlin would be sealed, just days before von Schnitzler's broadcast.¹⁰⁰ Only a select few, however, were aware of the decision. These included, alongside Ulbricht and Erich Honecker, *Stasi* chief Mielke, the Interior Minister, Defense Minister, and Transportation Minister. A meeting of the StRK held on July 28, 1961 did not address the matter of sealing the border. Instead, the focus was largely on perennial problems that had plagued GDR radio since the founding of the state: the need for stronger leadership, self-criticism, and better cooperation between the StRK and the SED leadership.¹⁰¹ During a meeting of the StRK Betriebsgruppe held on August 2, 1961, there was no discussion of the possibility that the border would be sealed. Indeed, radio officials continued to speak of promoting a peace treaty and even discussed the possibility of using West Marks to pay for equipment and what to do in the event of a blockade of West Berlin.¹⁰² However, it is clear that listeners to Deutschlandsender would be aware that the GDR was planning to do something. The constant declaration that *something* needed to be done was a part of every broadcast on the crisis. The status quo was simply *not* permissible.

Despite this, the Wall took the west by surprise when GDR soldiers and policeman began constructing the barrier on Sunday morning, August 13, 1961.¹⁰³ Should western listeners and observers have been surprised? An overview of the stories from June and July does not present any major hints that the GDR would pursue this policy, beyond the constant demand for an immediate solution to the Berlin problem.

¹⁰⁰ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 192.

¹⁰¹ "Aktennotiz über die außerordentliche Sitzung des Staatlichen Rundfunkkomitees zu Fragen der Leitungstätigkeit am 28.7.1961," Barch SAPMO, Abteilung Agitation, DY30/IV2/9.02/84.

¹⁰² "Leitung der Betriebsorganisation of the SRK," August 2, 1961, Barch SAPMO, Abteilung Agitation, DY30/IV2/9.02/84, 151

¹⁰³ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 207.

Yet, in early August commentaries began focusing on the issue of movement between the two Berlins. In a remarkable broadcast from August 4, Deutschlandsender announced that free movement would not be tolerated if it threatened the GDR. The speaker, Wolfgang Dast, noted that the GDR was in favor of free movement throughout the city. However, such movement could only exist if the city was declared an open and free territory. “We are in favor of free movement, just as we are in favor of self-determination. But we are against self-determination at our expense, at the expense of GDR workers. That is why we shall no longer tolerate the ‘Grenzgaengertum’ (East Germans working in West Berlin).”¹⁰⁴ The broadcast then announced that the East German government was going to end the practice of crossing the border to work in West Berlin. Although this did not amount to sealing the border itself, it nevertheless indicated that a shift had occurred in the GDR’s policies towards West Berlin.

However, East German stations continued to present both options (closing the border or seizing control of West Berlin) in their broadcasts. On August 9, less than a week before construction of the Berlin Wall began, Gerhart Eisler once again declared that the Western powers needed to find an immediate solution to the *West* Berlin question. Eisler insisted that the GDR’s goals were peaceful and that the proposal for a peace treaty was neither provocative nor a threat to world stability. Yet, critically, Eisler also insisted that, whatever action East Germany would take, it would not threaten West Berliners. “We will do nothing in the way of force or inflicting force upon any *West* German or *West* Berliner. We who are prepared to have one hair of our head touched are not prepared to harm the hair on the head of any West German, or West Berliner, or

¹⁰⁴ Wolfgang Dast Kommentar, Deutschlandsender, August 4, 1961, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe August 9, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127.

anyone else in the world. We will not fire a shot.”¹⁰⁵ Eisler declared that resolving the West Berlin question would prevent the West’s “plundering” of the GDR. Every state, Eisler affirmed, had the right to protect itself from outside threats. Again, there was no firm indication that the GDR had shifted policies and was planning to abandon its claims to West Berlin. Yet, the insistence that whatever action the GDR took would not threaten West Berlin is important, especially in light of the fact that the SED had already agreed to construct the wall on August 13.¹⁰⁶

On Sunday, August 13 1961, the GDR’s stations broadcasts notices from the Warsaw Pact, the East German government, and the East Berlin City Government declaring that in order to preserve peace, the GDR was adopting new measures to strictly control border movement between East and West Berlin.¹⁰⁷ That day, West and East Germans alike woke up to the site of East German police erecting barbed wire across the sector border and laying the foundation for a permanent barrier enclosing West Berlin. That evening, Gerhart Eisler sent a commentary on Deutschlandsender declaring that the GDR was sealing the border because there was simply no other alternative. “Our patience was exhausted; this is why by decision of the GDR Council of Ministers, in agreement with the governments of the Warsaw treaty partners, measures have been instituted today designed to protect and defend the GDR, the first German worker-peasant state.”¹⁰⁸ Since Sunday morning, Eisler declared, it would no longer be possible to swindle the GDR “out of at least 1 billion deutsch marks a year.” Furthermore, the

¹⁰⁵ Gerhart Eisler Kommentar, Deutschlandsender, August 10, 1961, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe August 9, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127.

¹⁰⁶ Harrison, 192-193

¹⁰⁷ FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe August 14, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127.

¹⁰⁸ Gerhart Eisler Kommentar, Deutschlandsender August 13, 1961, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe August 14, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127.

Western powers could no longer use West Berlin as a means of subverting the East German population or as a staging area for espionage operations against the GDR. Eisler emphatically declared, “Since this morning at 0400 an end has been put to all frontier crossing! Since this morning at 0400 the hopes of the West German militarists and the West Berlin frontline city politicians have been dashed before the whole world.”¹⁰⁹ The measure was described as a “peaceful but very effective blow” against Western militarists. As it had in 1948 and in 1953, East German radio evoked the image of a besieged East Germany under constant threat from a belligerent West. According to Eisler, Western leaders had interpreted East German proposals for a peace treaty as evidence of weakness. Thus, the broadcast characterized the Wall as evidence of the GDR’s strength and determination. As Eisler declared, “It is a historical fact that whenever the West German militarists thought they could triumph, and boasted about the weakness and the defeats by the enemies of the German militarists, they were given a stunning blow.”¹¹⁰ Eisler contended that the West German leaders were now in a state of confusion. In the course of the broadcast, Eisler almost seemed to be enjoying speaking about the shock created by the GDR’s action. “Their wails and grumbles are music to our ears. They are turning to the Western powers with pathetic lamentations, just as they are always moaning when something hits them.”¹¹¹

Importantly, Eisler made it clear that the construction of the wall would not resolve the Berlin question. The measure, he argued, would further the quest to sign a peace treaty between the two Germanys. By constructing the wall, Eisler contended, the GDR had rendered West Berlin useless. Since it could no longer be used by the West as

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

a center for espionage and subversion against the GDR, the Western powers would now see that signing a peace treaty and making their sectors a free city was the next logical step. Thus, the wall was a measure designed to create peace and stability. As Eisler said in defense of the barrier, “Rather 100 inconveniences to defend peace successfully than 1,000 so-called comforts only to slide subsequently into war!” Once more, GDR broadcasters presented the issue to its listeners as a choice between peace and war

In stark contrast to Eisler’s bombastic and triumphant tone, Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler’s broadcasts tried to evoke calm. His August 13 morning broadcast attempted to characterize the border closure as a routine and uninteresting event. “

‘Unsensational’—this word probably best characterizes the measures which, in agreement with the other countries of the Warsaw Pact, we took during the night.”¹¹²

The reporter then affirmed that West Berliners had the right to pass into the East Sectors and travel by rail into East Berlin. Thus, he sought to downplay the disruption and confusion that the wall’s construction had evoked. In the course of the broadcast, von Schnitzler invoked a statement made by William F. Fulbright on July 30, 1961 in which the Senator asked why the East German government didn’t close its border.¹¹³ As he and his colleagues had done on numerous occasions during the Berlin airlift, von Schnitzler deployed the open discussion of the US political system as a means of justifying the East German measure. “The government of the German Democratic Republic, the governments of the Warsaw Pact countries, the Ministries of the Interior and Transport of the GDR, and the city government of greater Berlin, agree explicitly with what Senator

¹¹² Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler Kommentar, August 12 [sic], 1961, FBIS Daily Report: USSR and Eastern Europe August 14, 1961, NARA, RG 263, Records of the CIA, FBIS, 263/150/62/20/3, Box 127. Note: The FBIS report notes this broadcast was sent at 09:12 GMT on August 12, 1961 (a Saturday). However, the text of von Schnitzler’s broadcast describes the wall’s construction in detail and refers to the day being a Sunday. It was almost certainly broadcast on August 13, 1961.

¹¹³ Gaddis, *We Now Know*,

Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives said a few days ago.”¹¹⁴ Von Schnitzler’s failure to understand the distinction between the Senate and the House of Representatives notwithstanding, his approach was nevertheless akin to the approach taken during the late 1940s when Berliner Rundfunk frequently cited Henry Wallace and Walter Lippmann. As he spoke, von Schnitzler stressed that East Germany had no intent to threaten West Berlin. Instead, it simply wished to invoke its right to self-determination. He closed on the same note as Eisler’s commentary, declaring that East Germany had simply lost patience with the West’s refusal to reach a settlement on the Berlin question.

Critically, the GDR’s broadcasts characterized the Berlin issue as a dispute between the two Germanys and less as a rivalry between the United States and the Soviets. The stations cited Adenauer and Brandt far more frequently than John F. Kennedy when making arguments about Western aggression. Broadcasters’ approach to Kennedy was mostly ambivalent. He was still treated by GDR reporters as the head of an aggressive, capitalist state hostile to the Soviets. However, the broadcasts tended to see him as a reasonable individual being pressured by militant and belligerent West German leaders. Despite this distinction however, East German radio nevertheless justified the construction of the Berlin Wall in the same way it justified the Berlin blockade, the repression of the June 17 Uprising, the erection of anti-RIAS jamming towers, and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. East Germany was a state under siege. West Germany, the militarist successor of Hitler’s fascist Germany, had dedicated itself to the destruction of the GDR and communism. Consequently, the Wall was a defensive measure. Despite the blow to the GDR’s legitimacy delivered by the

¹¹⁴ Von Schnitzler Kommentar, August 12 [sic], 1961.

wall's construction, the GDR nevertheless characterized the wall as a symbol of resolve and strength. In this light, the ironic term "Antifascist Protection Barrier" sounds less like an opportunistic euphemism and more like an integral element from narratives that had been crafted since 1948.

RIAS and the Berlin Wall

The years immediately preceding the construction of the Berlin Wall were troubled ones for RIAS. When Khrushchev first announced his Berlin ultimatum in 1958, the US government's support of the station was brought into question as US diplomats considered shutting down the broadcaster in exchange for similar concessions from the Soviets. The Eisenhower administration considered a number of proposals, including placing all radio activities in Berlin under UN oversight, reducing RIAS's overt propaganda broadcasts to the GDR, or closing the station altogether.¹¹⁵ In March, 1958, *The New York Times* reported that "the station, which served the West well throughout the blockade a decade ago, has become less important with the activation of other, more powerful transmitters in West Germany which direct their propaganda to all the East European satellites."¹¹⁶ Ultimately, none of these proposals came to pass. However, while US officials were concerned about the effect closing the station would have on morale in the GDR, the prevailing opinion was that shutting down the station would simply not be enough to satisfy the Soviets' demands.¹¹⁷ Regardless, the USIA, feeling it needed to strengthen support for the broadcaster, issued a series of brochures to various USIA posts throughout Europe in 1959.¹¹⁸

At the same time, the US Congress was cutting the station's budget and employees were leaving the station to work for SFB, West Berlin's newspapers, or other

¹¹⁵ Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, 138-139.

¹¹⁶ Drew Middleton, "A Chance to Negotiate: Soviet Concern Over East Germany Said to Provide an Opening on Berlin," *New York Times*, March 21, 1959.

¹¹⁷ Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, 139.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

media positions.¹¹⁹ The budget problems and increasing costs were offset by budgetary aid from the West German Ministry for All-German Affairs.¹²⁰ Thus, by 1958 the US station was in effect a German-American venture. Of course, RIAS had never solely been an American operation, in light of the fact that with the exception of 4 US control officers, its entire staff was German. However, the financial support further strengthened RIAS's ties to the West German government.

Despite these setbacks, RIAS remained a popular source for news and information amongst East Germans. The USIA's polls of East German visitors from 1960 and 1961 indicated that RIAS's popularity and prestige had not diminished (at least to those visitors questioned) in the face of competition from SFB and GDR stations. Most importantly, the station remained a trusted source for news and information on conditions in the GDR. A survey taken in the spring of 1960 indicated that 76% of those polled indicated RIAS was their favorite station, with 64% noting it was their preferred source for information about the GDR and 60% noting it was their primary source for news about the west.¹²¹ In contrast, only 19% listed stations in the GDR and only 8% listed SFB.¹²² Listeners from East and West Germany continued to write letters to the broadcaster and visit the station. In December of 1960 for example, the station received 8,263 letters and 303 visitors.¹²³ Letter topics ranged from programming questions to information about transit rights. Letters about travel rights between the two Germanys

¹¹⁹ Memorandum from the Ministry for All German Affairs, Z3-311, "Sender RIAS Berlin," April 4, 1959, BAK, B137/16257.

¹²⁰ Memorandum from the Ministry for All German Affairs, "Proposal for Increased Support of RIAS" 1959, BAK, B137/16257.

¹²¹ Memorandum from USIS Bonn to the United States Information Agency, *Advance flashes on 'Grüne Woche' survey*, March 4, 1960, NARA RG 306 (USIA) Office of Research: Country Project Correspondence, 1952-1963, Entry 1021, 250/67/18/03-06, Box 6.

¹²² DIVO, *USIS Poll of East Zone Visitors to "Green Week"* 1960, NARA RG 306 (USIA) Office of Research: Country Project Correspondence, 1952-1963, Entry 1021, 250/67/18/03-06, Box 6.

¹²³ RIAS Monthly Mail Report, December 19, 1960, NARA RG 306 (USIA) Office of Research: Country Project Correspondence, 1952-1963, Entry 1021, 250/67/18/03-06, Box 6.

are particularly interesting, as they attest to the fact that many listeners saw RIAS as a representative of the United States and not as just a media outlet. On December 27, 1960 for example, a writer named Viktoria W asked RIAS if she and her husband could travel through the GDR to visit her mother in Poland, even though her husband had fled the GDR in 1950. While the station recommended the letter writer forward her query to the West German anti-communist legal organization, the Untersuchungsausschuss freiheitlicher Juristen, the station also recommended that the woman not attempt any crossing the GDR.¹²⁴ Thus, RIAS styled itself not only as a media outlet, but as a source for personal advice on travel rights and financial issues related to living in and fleeing the GDR. In March of 1960 for example, RIAS was sent a letter from a West Berliner asking whether or not her parents would be paid a pension (for their respective services to the Deutsche Post and German army) if they fled Dresden for West Germany. Rather than forward her letter to a West German financial authority, RIAS invited the letter writer to come to the station itself, where they could discuss the matter in detail.¹²⁵

Letter writers from the GDR often sent letters thanking the station for its reports and also to provide the station with information and even their own thoughts on the politics of the day. A worker from Halle sent RIAS a letter dated January 6, 1961 in which he presented his assertions that there was no difference between Nazism and Communism. In many ways, his language reflected RIAS's own assertion that the ideological distinctions between the two systems was less important than their common quest for power and dominance. "The same system remains. Only the colors have changed," the anonymous writer declared. The writer declared that Ulbricht did not have

¹²⁴ Letter from Viktoria W to RIAS, December 12, 1960 and Letter from RIAS to Viktoria W, December 27, 1960, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, H404-00-04/0024, 20/93/40.

¹²⁵ Letter from Hildegard T to RIAS, March 24, 1960, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, H404-00-04/0041, 20.93.39.

the workers' support and that the only thing supporting the Soviet satellites was Red Army tanks.¹²⁶

RIAS remained an important institution during the years immediately preceding the construction of the Berlin Wall. East Germans and West Germans alike continued to tune into the station for news and information. Letter writers from both Germanys treated RIAS like an *ersatz*-US embassy in East Germany. Listeners treated it as a source for basic information about transit rights between the GDR and West Germany and the often-complex legal problems created by the division of Germany. This role would be particularly important during the days after the GDR sealed the Berlin border.

As with Berliner Rundfunk and Deutschland Radio, the Berlin Crisis dominated RIAS news and commentary during the summer of 1961. In a Sunday commentary delivered on June 18, 1961, Heinz Frentzel described Khrushchev's proposal for a peace treaty as pointless and declared that the Soviets, by disturbing the status quo, were in fact the greater threat to peace when compared to the United States and West Germany.¹²⁷ Frentzel argued that Ulbricht simply did not have the legitimacy to represent all of the German people. Speaking of Germany, Frentzel was also clear that he spoke not only of the GDR and FRG, but also the territories annexed by Poland. As he noted, "The recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line with a dozen communist signatures would be completely worthless in the eyes of moral and international law."¹²⁸ The peace treaty would also exacerbate an already tense international situation. By changing the status quo and threatening the rights to West Berlin, the Soviets would embarrass the Western

¹²⁶ Letter from a resident of Halle to RIAS, January 6, 1961, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, H404-00-04/0029, 20.93.027. "Das System ist geblieben. Nur die Farbe hat sich geändert."

¹²⁷ Heinz Frentzel, "Sonntagmittagskommentar," June 18, 1961, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0011.

¹²⁸ Ibid., "Die Anerkennung der Oder-Neiße-Linie durch ein Dutzend kommunistischer Unterschriften wäre moralisch und völkerrechtlich völlig wertlos...."

powers and force them to strengthen their resolve and only increase tensions between the two sides. Anticipating John F. Kennedy's praise of West Berlin's status as a frontline city of the Cold War in 1963, Frentzel countered the Soviet assertion that West Berlin's ambiguous status was detrimental to the city's residents. At the same time, he was likely making an effort to raise the morale of what must have been a tense and anxious population: "Is it really a burden, a bitter fate of power politics? Rather, is it not the case, that by vouching for Berlin, the West has the unique opportunity to demonstrate to the Soviets, to the Neutral Powers, and most importantly to themselves, the strength and power of liberal self-determination seen in Berlin?"¹²⁹ In reality, West Berlin represented the unlucky fate of the Soviets themselves. Since June 17, 1953, a tenth of East Germany's population had fled the GDR for West Berlin. Thus, it was the Soviets, and not the West Berliners, who were the true victims of fate. As Frentzel closed, he drew upon British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan's 1960 "Wind of Change" speech. "The great wind of change that is blowing through the southern half of the world has swept away the last remnants of colonialism and has let loose the right to self-determination. It will not be possible for the people of our continent to remain under communist dominance and withhold these rights in the long run."¹³⁰

A month later, RIAS commentator Hanns W. Schwarze devoted the bulk of his Sunday commentary to the Berlin problem. Schwarze blamed Khrushchev for simplifying the issue and making the struggle into a simple choice between war and abandoning West

¹²⁹ Ibid., Aber ist das wirklich eine Last, eine bittere Ungunst des machtpolitischen Schicksals? Ist es nicht vielmehr so, dass in und an einer solchen Stadt der Westen die einzigartige Möglichkeit hat, den Sowjets, den Neutralen und vor allem sich selbst immer wieder die Stärke und die Kraft des eigenen freiheitlichen Selbstbehauptungswillens zu beweisen, im Einstehen für Berlin?

¹³⁰ Ibid., "Der grosse Wind der Veränderung, der auf der südlichen Erdhälfte weht, hat dort bis auf Reste den Kolonialismus weggefeht und das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung freigelegt. Es wird nicht möglich sein, den Völkern unseres Kontinents, die unter kommunistischer Herrschaft stehen, auf die Dauer dieses Recht vorzuenthalten."

Berlin. By doing so, the Soviet leader, along with Walter Ulbricht, had increased tensions and actually increased the threat of war.¹³¹ “They ask if Berlin’s four power statute is more important than world peace. They say there is no other alternative. But that is a lie, an evil and dangerous life. Whoever believes it is already a victim of this war of nerves, which will become stronger in the future.”¹³² Schwarze acknowledged the power of language and rhetoric in shaping the stakes and issues of the Berlin Crisis. Soviet propaganda had succeeded in transforming the dispute over Berlin into a matter of peace and war. In comparison, the Western insistence that it maintain its access rights to West Berlin would inevitably sound trivial.

Thus, an important goal of Schwarze’s broadcast was to deconstruct the Soviet argument and stress the importance of the western position. He did so by casting Berlin as a symbol. Berlin was a lesson and an example to the Soviets and the West. It was also a hole in the “prison of the GDR,” evidence of Communism’s limits, and an expression of the German peoples’ desire for unity.¹³³ As he noted, once before the Soviets had made the argument that Berlin was so small and strategically insignificant that the Western powers would not risk war over its status. Yet, as in 1948, the Soviets were forced to realize that political morality as well as strategic interests motivated the Western powers. “Obligation, morality, and political conviction were the reasons Stalin’s 1948 blockade of Berlin collapsed. They are also the reasons for the failure of

¹³¹ Hanns W. Schwarze, “Sonntagskommentar,” July 23, 1961, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0011.

¹³² Ibid., 1. “Ob denn Berlins Viermächtestatut wichtiger sei als der Weltfriede, so fragen sie, eine andere Alternative gebe es nicht, so reden sie--aber das ist eine Lüge, eine böse und gefährliche Lüge, wer sie glaubt, der ist schon Opfer dieses Nervenkrieg geworden, der noch stärker werden dürfte in den nächsten Zeit.”

¹³³ Ibid., 5., “Berlin mit seinem Viermächtestatut ist nicht nur wichtig als Loch in Gefängnis DDR, nicht nur als Beweis für die Begrenzung kommunistischer Anziehungskraft, sobald die Industrialisierung vollzogen ist, sondern es ist auch wichtig im gar nicht nationalistischen, aber schlicht deutschen Sinne: als verbreiteter Anspruch unseres Volkes auf seine Einheit.”

Khrushchev's frontal assault that began in 1958 and was abandoned last summer.”¹³⁴

This time, however, the tactics would be different. Although Schwarze did not go so far as to suggest the construction of the Berlin Wall, he nevertheless made his listeners aware that, due to the presence of nuclear weapons, Stalin's tactics of 1948 would not be repeated. Instead, Khrushchev would be deploying a flanking maneuver against the Western powers. Yet, Schwarze insisted that the Western powers were neither naïve nor weak. The demand for a peace treaty was unrealistic and ignored the fact that West Germany was fully integrated into the Western Alliance. Although the Soviets had made the crisis into a choice between peace and war, the choice remained in Khrushchev's hands. Khrushchev could easily abandon his flanking maneuver and rescind his demands.

Yet, it was clear that Schwarze was concerned that even if Khrushchev were to back off, Ulbricht could still seal the border. Thus, about three weeks before the border was actually sealed, Schwarze spoke about concerns that this could very well happen. Thousands were fleeing East Germany, and Schwarze noted that many were motivated to flee due to their concerns that the path between the two Berlins would soon be obstructed. Closing the border, Schwarze warned, would be a breach of the law and a breach of the Berlin statute.¹³⁵ He did not anticipate the fact that the Western powers would only consider sealing the border a breach of the four- power statute if *they* were not allowed access to the entire city. Thus, although the construction of the Wall eventually came as

¹³⁴ Ibid., 2. “Verpflichtung, Moral und politische Überzeugung waren der Grund dafür, daß Stalins Berlinblockade 1948 scheiterte. Sie sind die Ursache für das Mißlingen von Chruschtschows Frontalangriff, der 1958 begonnen und erst letzten Sommer abgeblasen wurde.”

¹³⁵ Ibid., 6.

a shock, RIAS commentators were aware of the possibility and cautioning listeners about it weeks in advance.

Being aware that the construction of a Berlin Wall was a possibility did not assuage the sense of shock and outrage that poured forth from RIAS's commentators beginning August 13, 1961. The surprise of the Berlin Wall's construction was palpable in both RIAS's commentaries and news broadcasts.¹³⁶ Reports for the days preceding August 13 gave little indication of what was to come. On Friday, August 11 the station reported on Cosmonaut Germain Titov's orbital flight. On August 12, news broadcasts reported information on the renewal of Romanian-Soviet relations, a speech delivered by West Berlin mayor Willy Brandt at an SPD Party Meeting in Nuremberg, and an attempted coup in Argentina. Throughout, there were also news reports on the steady flow of refugees crossing the sector border into West Berlin. The last RIAS news reports of August 12 concerning the refugee stream noted that 1,332 individuals had registered at West Berlin's Marienfelde Refugee Camp since Thursday, August 10.¹³⁷

At 4am on August 13, RIAS began reporting that the GDR was initiating drastic controls for the Berlin sector border. The initial report simply related the basic facts of the GDR measure. The complete broadcast lasted only four sentences:

During early morning Sunday, the Soviet Zone Peoples'
Police have begun cordoning off the Sector Border between

¹³⁶ The Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv and Deutsches Historisches Museum have produced an excellent compilation of radio broadcasts regarding the construction of the Berlin Wall on compact disk. They include broadcasts from all of the GDR's major stations, RIAS, and SFB. See DRA *Stimme des 20. Jahrhunderts: Berlin, 13. August 1961*, DHM DRA II 2001. Among the many things we can learn from these excerpts is the palpable sense of surprise and shock in the voices of the SFB and RIAS reporters on August 13.

¹³⁷ See RIAS News Broadcasts for August 11, 1961 and August 12, 1961, DRA Potsdam RIAS Depositum, B 203-00-00-02/0003.

East and West Berlin. The entire night service of the Berlin Urban Rail network between the two parts of the city will be discontinued. With this, the East Berlin authorities have at once complied with the requests of the Warsaw Pact member states to take complete control over the border with West Berlin. According to Warsaw Pact communiqué circulated by the Soviet Zone news agency AND, connections between West Berlin and the Federal Republic will not be affected by the new measures.¹³⁸

The manuscript on which this news report was typed is heavily edited, in stark contrast to broadcast transcripts from the previous day. The majority of these are corrections, with almost every sentence needing some kind of edit and it is most likely the manuscript was written in considerable haste as news of the border closure reached the station. More detailed reports followed, and by 10:20 that morning, the brief report from 4am had developed into a much more detailed and critical overview of the day's events. Broadly, it addressed the major elements originally broadcast earlier that morning: the GDR was closing the border but right of access between West Berlin and West Germany would not be interrupted. However, whereas the first broadcast simply related the East German and Warsaw Pact press releases, the 10:20 broadcast was far more condemnatory, and revealed the distinctive voice of RIAS's reporters. "This morning, the Soviet Zone authorities, in a unilateral, despotic act, have broken the Four Power Agreement concerning freedom of movement for all Germans in the two Berlins and have barred East Berliners and residents of the Zone from crossing the Zone and Sector borders to

¹³⁸ RIAS News Broadcast, 4:00am, August 13, 1961, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, "Die sowjetzonale Volkspolizei hat in der Nacht zum Sonntag mit der Abriegelung der Sektorgrenze zwischen Ost und West Berlin begonnen. Der gesamte Nachtverkehr auf der Berliner S-Bahn zwischen beiden Teilen der Stadt wurde eingestellt. Damit sind die Ostberliner Behörden sofort der Aufforderung der Mitgliedsstaaten des Warschauer Pakts nachgekommen, an den Grenzen Westberlins eine wirksame Kontrolle einzuführen. Wie es in dem von der sowjetzonalen Nachrichtenagentur AND verbreiteten Kommuniqué der Warschauer Paktstaaten heißt, werden die Verbindungswege zwischen Westberlin und der Bundesrepublik von den neuen Maßnahmen nicht berührt."

West Berlin.”¹³⁹ More than once the RIAS report characterized the measure as “despotic” and “unilateral,” thus emphasizing the violation of the Four Power Agreement. The report also laid the foundations for the kind of vocabulary used by RIAS to characterize the Wall. “The picture on West Berlin’s sector and zonal borders is denoted by barbed wire, barriers, Soviet Zone tanks, scout cars, as well as a massive offering of Peoples’ Police and Zone soldiers.”¹⁴⁰ The image of barbed wire would permeate almost all of RIAS’s early broadcasts covering the Berlin Wall, a fact that reminds us that initially the Berlin Wall was a series of barbed wire barriers and not the massive concrete blockade that has entered the popular imagination. Indeed, shortly after the Wall’s construction, the station began producing a program on life behind the wall entitled, *Bewaffnete am Stacheldraht*, (Gunmen at the Barbed Wire).

That evening, RIAS report Hans-Peter Herz gave a commentary on the day’s events. The son of RIAS and SFB commentator Hans Herz, Hans-Peter was eighteen when World War II ended. He had worked for the station since 1950 in various departments, including Youth programming and the Eastern European news bureau. His broadcast in many ways represents a synthesis of the major assertions, arguments, and criticisms that RIAS had leveled against East Germany since the station first turned to rigorous anti-communism in 1948. It was not particularly different from the broadcasts sent by Victor Klages and Eugen Hartmann during the Berlin blockade. Herz immediately evoked memory of those days when he declared that Ulbricht and the

¹³⁹ RIAS News Broadcast, 10:20am, August 13, 1961, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, “Die Sowjetzonenbehörden haben heute nacht in einem einseitigen Willkürakt die Viermächte-Vereinbarungen über die Bewegungsfreiheit für alle Deutschen in beiden Teilen Berlins gebrochen und die Zonen-sowie Sektorengrenzen nach Westberlin für Ostberliner und Zonenbewohner gesperrt.”

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 1. “Das Buld an den Sektoren—und Zonengrenzen Westberlins wird durch Stacheldrahtberhaue, Spanische Reiter, sowjetzonale Panzer und Panzerspähwagen sowie ein Massenaufgebot an Volkspolizisten und Zonensoldaten gekennzeichnet.”

Warsaw Pact had completed the “second division of Berlin.”¹⁴¹ And just as easily as Victor Klages proclaimed apparent Soviet successes as evidence of Communism’s inherent weakness, Herz condemned the construction of the Berlin Wall as evidence of “bankruptcy” of the East German regime. Confronting Gerhart Eisler and Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler’s assertions that the Wall was an expression of the GDR’s strength and assertiveness, Herz noted:

The Zonal Authorities may think that Berliners, the residents of Central Germany, and observers from around the world will see the weapons staring from the Sector border as evidence of the strength of the so-called socialist camp. They may think this, yet every man in the East and West keenly knows that the events of the early morning of August 13 are evidence of a bankrupt, armed regime pursuing a failed political system.¹⁴²

Herz followed this assertion by invoking the memory of the Nazi past. “Ulbricht’s manipulation of the situation in Berlin reminds me in many ways of the events of the national socialist period.”¹⁴³ Throughout the remainder of his broadcast, Herz proceeded to transform Ulbricht into the reincarnation of Adolf Hitler. The breach of the Four Power agreement and the Potsdam Agreement of 1945 was reminiscent of Hitler’s many violations of international agreements. Like the Nazis, Ulbricht and his associates ignored the wishes and demands of the people. Despite claims that the Wall was an

¹⁴¹ Peter Herz, Sonntagmittagskommentar, August 13, 1961, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0011.

¹⁴² Ibid., 2. “Die Zonenbehörden mögen meinen, dass die Berliner, dass die Bewohner Mitteldeutschlands und die Beobachter aus aller Welt die Waffenstarrenden Sektorengrenzen für Beweise der Stärke des sogenannten sozialistischen Lagers halten. Sie mögen es meinen, doch jeder Mensch in Ost und West weiß sehr genau, seit den frühen Morgenstunden des 13. August demonstriert ein bankrotttes Regime mit bewaffneter Macht für eine gescheiterte Politik.”

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2 “Die Situation, die durch Ulbrichts Verhalten in Berlin herbeigeführt worden ist, erinnert in manchem an Ereignisse der nationalsozialistischen Zeit.”

expression of the peoples' demand for protection, Herz noted that, "There has been no such demand and there never will be such a demand."¹⁴⁴ The East German people had made their demands clear by abandoning the GDR for West Germany. Herz subsequently cited the German Communist leader Rosa Luxemburg, murdered during the German Revolution of 1918. Responding to claims that Ulbricht was the successor of Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and that he was implementing their goals, Herz questioned what both leaders would have thought of the Wall.

Rosa Luxemburg would possibly pose only one question: What is your position regarding the freedom of dissent? As everyone knows, she wrote in one of her letters that freedom is the freedom to dissent. However, we are leaving that. Germany's communists do not follow the path of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, they march on the well-tread path of the brown dictator. They perfect and complete, for a portion of our people, what Hitler began for all of us...¹⁴⁵

There could be no clearer statement of the contention that Ulbricht and the SED were the successors of the National Socialists. By invoking Luxemburg and Liebknecht, the leaders of Germany's failed revolution who were murdered by right-wing paramilitary forces, Herz was attacking the very foundation of East Germany's antifascist narratives. Thus, through the commentary, he assaulted the foundation of the East German state itself.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 3. "Es hat keine solchen Forderung gegeben und es wird sie nicht geben."

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 5. "Sie hat ja bekanntlich in einem ihrer Briefe geschrieben, Freiheit ist immer die Freiheit des Andersdenkenden. Aber lassen wir dass. Deutschlands Kommunisten folgen nichts dem Wege Rosa Luxemburgs und Karl Liebknechts, sie marschieren aus dem ausgetretenen Pfad der braunen Diktatur. Sie vervollkommen und vollenden für einen Teil unseres Volkes, was Hitler für das ganze begann..."

The following Sunday's commentary by Heinz Frentzel drew upon similar themes. However, he also did more to place the struggles of the German people within the context of the Cold War.¹⁴⁶ For example, he immediately compared the events of August 13 with the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, stating, "On the night of November 4 five years ago, we believed we understood the pain of the Hungarians. Now we can truly understand it."¹⁴⁷ Perhaps uncertain about the Western position in the city himself, Frentzel also went to great lengths to reassure his listeners that NATO and the Western powers had not abandoned West Berlin. West Berlin remained protected by the NATO defense guarantee. Yet, as Frentzel pointed out, NATO could not act with force unless the territory of a NATO state had been violated.

Thus, Frentzel reaffirmed what must have been a troubling realization to many listeners: that the East German people were not protected by the Western powers. Frentzel stressed that the Western powers and West Germans remained in solidarity with the East German people. However, Frentzel also acknowledged the misgivings and anxiety afflicting West Berlin. Referring to the recent visit of US Vice President Lyndon Johnson and the former US military governor of Germany, Lucius Clay to West Berlin, Frentzel stated the visit was exactly what Berlin needed. By visiting West Berlin, Clay and Johnson had affirmed the United States' commitment to West Berlin and insured that Berliners knew that West Berlin and the Western powers now shared the same fate. Although the West could not use military force against the East Germans, the west was obligated to protest the Wall and the actions of the GDR. The legitimacy of the West

¹⁴⁶ Heinz Frentzel, Sonntagsmittagskommentar, August 20, 1961, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0011.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 1. "Am Abend des 4. November vor fünf Jahren hatten wir geglaubt, den Schmerz der Ungarn zu begreifen. Jetzt begreifen wir ihn wirklich."

rested not only on affirming its own political, social, and economics superiority, but also in affirming unity and sympathy with the needs and pain of those living behind the Iron Curtain.

In line with these statements, Frentzel argued that the Western world needed to now take the opportunity to characterize the, “ ‘dirty victory’ of the Concentration Camp Regime” as a manifestation of political and human failure.¹⁴⁸ Thus, Frentzel contributed to the growing discourse, begun a week earlier, about what the Wall symbolized. Frentzel saw the Wall as a representation of the failure of the Soviet system. Thousands from the western and non-aligned world could now see the “Wall of socialist humanism.” Behind it, the GDR was suffocating its citizens’ freedom of conscience. Thus, while the Wall was new, the ideas it represented were not. The wall and barbed wire were Soviet colonialism manifest and had opened the world’s eyes to the failures of the Soviet system.

Although his primary focus was on the immediate events, Frentzel, like Herz, used the language of the Nazi period to characterize the East German and Soviet actions. The RIAS commentator frequently described the East German police as “Concentration Camp Wardens” (“KZ-Wächtern.”) The commentary described the GDR as a “Concentration Camp State” (“KZ-Staat.”). Like Herz, Frentzel was also careful to make it clear that the Wall was not a Soviet victory, but a symbol of ineptitude and failure. Once again in response to GDR broadcasters claims of strength, Frentzel responded, “They take it to be a victory, a victory of peace on top of that, although it is nothing more than a memorial to their ineptitude, their mismanagement, and their failure. On the misused black-red-gold flag of their concentration camp state, they should paste a new

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.

emblem: the emblem of barbed wire.”¹⁴⁹ Once again, the image of barbed wire was used to characterize the Wall.

The image of barbed wire became a predominant theme of Walter Gerhard’s August 26 commentary the following week. Speaking ironically as a communist writer, Gerhard declared, “I believe in barbed wire and no longer in progress. I no longer believe in the fundamentals of ideology but only in the execution of terror, in violence, and the power of their brutal forms.”¹⁵⁰ Thus, Gerhard stressed the argument that RIAS had been making for over a decade: that the SED was uninterested in true ideology and socialism and was more concerned with attainment and exercise of power. The commentary depicted Ulbricht and the Soviet leadership as the successors of Russia’s autocrats. “Ulbricht has brought to Germany what the Russian Tsars and the Soviets brought to Siberia: exile and work camps. Consequently, Ulbricht’s new order contains the possibility of linking so-called residence restrictions with work education.”¹⁵¹

The shadow of the Berlin blockade fell upon Gerhard’s commentary as it had Herz’s August 13 broadcast. Recent debates between the Western powers and the Soviets concerning access to the three air corridors gave Gerhard cause to be concerned about the possibility that the Soviets could curtail air access to the city. Thus, Gerhard continued to express concern that the GDR’s main aim was to absorb all of Berlin, including the Western Sectors. Gerhard asserted that both Ulbricht and Khrushchev were completing the work begun by Stalin in 1948: the Prague Coup, the “gleichschaltung”

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 3. “Sie nennen es einen Sieg, einen Sieg des Friedens noch dazu, obwohl es nichts ist als ein Denkmal ihrer Unfähigkeit, ihrer Mißwirtschaft, ihres Scheiterns. In daß mißbrauchte Schwarze-Rot-Gold der Fahne ihres KZ-Staates sollten sie als neues Emblem Stacheldraht kleben.”

¹⁵⁰ Walter Gerhard, Sonntagsmittagskommentar, RIAS Berlin, August 26, 1961, DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, B 304-01-00/0011, 1. “Ich glaube an den Stacheldraht, nicht mehr an den Fortschritt, nicht mehr an die Grundsätze der Ideologie, sondern nur an die Wirkung des Terrors, an die Gewalt, an die Macht in ihrer brutalsten Form.”

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 3. “Was die russischen Zaren und nach ihnen die Sowjets in Sibirien praktizierten, der Verbannung und die Einrichtung von Arbeitslagern, Ulbricht überträgt es heute nach Deutschland, denn diese neue Verordnung enthält auch die Möglichkeit, die sogenannte Aufenthaltsbeschränkung mit einer Arbeitserziehung zu verbinden.”

(coordination) of the Eastern Bloc, and the division of Berlin. Their goal remained the same as Stalin's goal in 1948-49: the absorption of West Berlin into the Soviet bloc. By cordoning off East Berlin, Gerhard argued, Khrushchev's true aim was to isolate West Berlin and pressure the Western powers to acknowledge his demand that the West Berlin become a free city. Gerhard's interpretation was not shared by US leaders and also ignored the fact, as one could discern from the GDR's own radio broadcasts, that the Soviet and SED leadership really did see the Wall as a defensive measure designed to preserve the GDR.¹⁵² However, Gerhard's comments certainly gave expression to the anxiety and fear that many Berliners, including those working for RIAS's staff, must have felt at the time.

Like Frentzel and Herz earlier in the month, Gerhard characterized the wall as a symbolic manifestation of Communism's failure. Even though East German officials were describing the wall as a victory, it was in fact a "decisive defeat."¹⁵³ At the same time, his commentary expressed anger with non-aligned states that refused to acknowledge the situation in Berlin was not just an issue of concern to the superpowers. As he noted, "There are still a sufficient number of neutral and non-aligned states that believe that in Berlin a match is being fought between the great powers. They do not see that in the middle of the twentieth century, in the middle of Europe, 16 million people are being impressed into a colonial status based on political-ideological and militarist

¹⁵² John F. Kennedy saw the wall as evidence that Khrushchev was abandoning his claims to West Berlin. As he noted when he received news of the Wall's construction, "Why would Khrushchev put up a wall if he really intended to seize West Berlin? There wouldn't be any need of a wall if he occupied the whole city. This is his way out of his predicament." See Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 207.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.

foundations.”¹⁵⁴ It was the obligation of the West, and reporters like those at RIAS, to broadcast what conditions were like behind the “concrete wall and barbed wire.”

Beginning with its broadcasts on August 13, RIAS made efforts to transform the Wall into the manifestation of the Communist system in East Germany. In doing so, it drew upon the same themes and arguments developed by the station during the First Berlin Crisis of 1948-49. In contrast to Soviet claims, RIAS asserted, the Berlin Wall was neither a victory nor a symbol of socialism’s strength. In fact, the Wall represented the ineptitude, failure, and oppression of the GDR’s Communist system. RIAS’s commentators characterized Walter Ulbricht as the successor of Adolf Hitler. The SED leaders’ claim that he was a true socialist was merely a cynical attempt to mask his quest for power and control. The massive flow of refugees over the West Berlin border was evidence that the East German people did not want to live in the GDR and support the Communist state. RIAS subsequently declared that the GDR’s claim that the Wall was an expression of the peoples’ will and need for protection were spurious and unfounded. East Germany became synonymous with barbed wire and concrete in RIAS’s broadcasts.

The Berlin Wall and New Listener Habits

For West and East Germans living on either side of the Wall, RIAS continued to be a source of morale and information. Both the USIA and the station continued to poll individuals who had escaped from East Berlin to determine the station’s effectiveness. The data for these surveys was far less representative of the GDR’s population as a whole

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 3. “Es gibt noch genügend Neutrale und Fernstehende, die glauben, daß hier in Berlin ein Match nur zwischen den Großmächten ausgetragen wird, die nicht sehen wollen, daß in der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts mitten in Europa 16 Millionen Menschen in einen politisch-ideologischen und militärischen Kolonialstatus hineingepreßt werden.

than during the 1950s however. Whereas before 1961 it was relatively easy to travel between the two Berlins, to do so after 1961 risked arrest and even death. Thus, those who escaped were both politically motivated and usually driven by a wish to reunite with family. Yet, a sample of 200 escapees polled by the German organizations DIVOS for the USIA in May of 1962 was diverse in terms of gender, age, and social background.¹⁵⁵ The majority of those surveyed were woman, at 59%. About a quarter had completed High School, with 9% having attended University. About a quarter were between 21 and 29, with another quarter being between 40-49. Most were either civil servants (29%) or housewives (20%). The survey indicated that RIAS remained the most popular station and source for news and information in the GDR. No other station came close to RIAS's popularity.¹⁵⁶ When asked which station was the most important to them personally, 67% of those surveyed stated RIAS, with SFB coming in second at just 6%. Information on the Eastern Zone was cited as the most important element of RIAS's programming.

Interestingly, although RIAS was still the favored station, East German stations rose dramatically in popularity as a source for information on conditions in the GDR. When asked where they received most of the information after the Wall went up, 88% of individuals polled stated they received their news from Western stations. However, in comparison to a poll of escapees who had fled to the West before the Wall was constructed, the number was actually smaller, with 92% stating they listened to Western

¹⁵⁵ USIA Research and Reference Service, *Reported Reasons for Flight of Post-Wall Escapees from East Germany*, December 1962, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Research Reports, 1960-1963, Entry 1013A, 250/67/08/05-07, Box 9, 7.

¹⁵⁶ USIA Research and Reference Service, *Post-Wall Significance of RIAS and other Radio Stations Reported by East German Escapees*, July 1962, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Research Reports, 1960-1963, Entry 1013A, 250/67/08/05-07, Box 9, 1-2.

stations in the previous poll.¹⁵⁷ Yet, whereas before August 1961 just 13% of escapees listed East German radio as a source for information on foreign events, in 1962 the GDR's broadcasters received 81%. However, this did not necessarily mean those being polled considered East German broadcasters important or accurate. When asked which stations had become more important to East Germans as a result of the construction of the Berlin Wall, just 4% stated GDR stations were "more important," with 50% stating they had become less important. 86% listed RIAS as being "more important," with only 1% stating the USIA broadcaster had become "less important."¹⁵⁸ The majority stated RIAS's importance was due to its link to the West and its broadcasting of accurate information. When asked why they thought the GDR's stations had become less important, the majority of respondents answered, "Broadcasts only lies."¹⁵⁹

The survey reveals a critical piece of information: the majority of those fleeing East Berlin after the erection of the Berlin Wall were active listeners to RIAS and saw RIAS as a conduit to the West and source of accurate information. A survey from December 1962 using the same polling sample noted that one in three of those interviewed cited radio as a major influence on their decision to flee the GDR.¹⁶⁰ The majority of those surveyed indicated that reuniting with their family and escaping political pressure were the main motivation for their fleeing the GDR. 38% stated they were influenced to leave by what they heard on the radio, with about 80% of those responding that RIAS was the station that most influenced their decision.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁶⁰ USIA Research and Reference Service, *Reported Reasons for Flight of Post-Wall Escapees from East Germany*, December 1962, NARA RG 306 (USIA), Research Reports, 1960-1963, Entry 1013A, 250/67/08/05-07, Boxes 9, 1-2.

Thus, despite the Wall's construction, for many people RIAS remained the preferred source for news and information about both the GDR and the world outside East Germany. It remained a link to the West and represented an accurate alternative to the news stations of the GDR.

Conclusion

The period between 1956 and 1961 was a tumultuous one in the history of the Cold War. Khrushchev's Secret Speech in February 1956 began a process of destalinization that helped lead to uprisings in Poland and Hungary and subsequently forced Khrushchev to adopt violent measures to maintain the solidarity of the Soviet bloc. At the same time, the GDR's refugee problem continued to threaten the viability of East Germany as a state. Ulbricht and Khrushchev's strong-armed solution of erecting the Berlin Wall put an end to the crisis. However, the erection of the Wall was a visible expression of East Germany's instability and linked the fate of Soviet satellite to the fate of the barrier. As long as the Berlin Wall remained, so would East Germany. Once it disappeared (along with Soviet troops), East Germany's legitimate claim to statehood would collapse.

For Berlin's radio stations, these events were opportunities to both reiterate arguments and assertions made since the late 1940s. Both the GDR's radio stations and SFB and RIAS reported the Hungarian Uprising and the erection of the Berlin Wall using themes and motifs first developed during the First Berlin Crisis and the June 17, 1953 Uprising. For the GDR, the Hungarian Uprising was another fascist coup attempt

launched by the United States in order to overthrow a Communist state. As with June 17, the Hungarian Uprising was directed and managed by US saboteurs and spies through the use of radio broadcasts. Likewise, the erection of the Berlin Wall was justified in the same language used to justify the jamming of RIAS broadcasts and the arrest of RIAS listeners. GDR stations once again characterized East Germany as a state under siege and on the precipice of being destroyed by the United States and fascist resurgent West Germany. Consequently, the Berlin Wall was justified as an antifascist, defensive measure designed to protect East Germany. As scholars of the decision making process behind the Berlin Wall have shown, this was an opinion not only disseminated by the GDR's radio stations, but one that was held by its leaders.¹⁶¹

The GDR's stations were not alone in drawing upon old arguments and motifs to describe these crises. RIAS and SFB broadcasts immediately declared solidarity with the Hungarian rebels and cited Germany's experience of the 1953 uprising as a parallel. At the same time, however, the realization that the uprising would fail coupled with Britain and France's intervention in Egypt led both RIAS and SFB reporters to express their doubts that any kind of dramatic change in the Cold War status quo could be achieved. Thus, in contrast to the hopeful and often triumphant broadcasts that marked the June 17 uprising, West Berlin's broadcast journalists began to express disillusion and despondency at the fact that Germany's fate (and that of the Eastern Bloc's) was tied to the actions and decisions of the superpowers. Yet, after the erection of the Berlin Wall, RIAS reporters went to great lengths to reaffirm the ties between West Berlin and the Western powers. At the same time, RIAS broadcasts deployed the same arguments and language used to describe the blockade and the airlift. Once again, ideologically

¹⁶¹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall*.

distinctions between Communism and Nazism were downplayed. Instead, RIAS commentators depicted a continuum between Adolf Hitler's National Socialism and Walter Ulbricht's Communism. Broadcasters characterized both ideologies as oppressive, manipulative doctrines with little ideological distinction or characteristics. Commentators characterized the GDR as a concentration camp whose foundation rested on barbed wire and the force of arms.

Conclusion

Throughout the 1950s, RIAS Berlin ultimately became the most popular source for news and information in East Germany. Why, considering the advantages held by German Communists when they began broadcasting from the Haus des Rundfunks in 1945, did a station funded by a foreign power dedicated to overtly political goals become more popular than any of the GDR's local stations? Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the answer to this question lies in how RIAS negotiated the balance between objective news reporting and partisan journalism. RIAS never claimed to be a neutral observer of events in Berlin. However, whereas East Germany's stations believed that objective journalism was counterproductive to building socialism, RIAS journalists believed that one could balance accurate news and partisan engagement. This mixture strengthened RIAS's popularity amongst East German listeners. At the same time, East Germany's stations quickly lost credibility as a dependable news source.

This dissertation has sought to examine how radio stations tried to shape political culture in Cold War Berlin. Throughout, I have argued that the close relationship between audience and broadcaster was an integral component to how stations shaped political language. Previously, work on the history of European political culture has focused on the use of language and symbols to shape politics and build consensus.¹ However, due to the nature of the sources, historians of political ideas have rarely been

¹ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, and Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*.

able to assess the critical question of how these ideas were received and understood by the public in general. Works that have engaged the question of public opinion in totalitarian societies, notably works on the Third Reich by Robert Gellately and Ian Kershaw, have been able to draw on limited sources to determine mass opinion in Nazi Germany.² Yet, even historians of political culture German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic of Germany have only recently begun to ascertain the connection between the transmission and reception of ideas.³ Intellectual and political historians of the period after 1945 are fortunate to have a wide variety of sources on public opinion and attitudes. The availability of surveys, listener letters, and audience meeting reports means that we can no longer claim total ignorance of public attitudes, even in a totalitarian state like the German Democratic Republic.

As Michael Meyen has noted, scholars have often given audiences a subordinate role when studying the nature and characteristics of the mass media.⁴ An important goal of this dissertation has been to treat audiences as integral players in the development of broadcasting in postwar Germany. The specific historical circumstances of Berlin during the early Cold War affords historians the opportunity to engage questions about reception and public opinion that historians have been unable to ask in the past. While Berlin was divided, its radio stations nevertheless competed to win over a single audience: the German people, specifically those living in the German Democratic Republic. As a consequence of the joint occupation of the city, the citizens of the GDR could visit West Berlin, providing US and West German officials an opportunity that had not existed in

² Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

³ For some examples, see Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory* and Herf, *War by Other Means*.

⁴ Michael Meyen, *Hauptsache Unterhaltung: Mediennutzung und Medienbewertung in Deutschland in den 50er Jahren*, (Lit Verlag: Münster, 2001), 11-18.

Nazi Germany or in the Soviet Union; the chance to interview the residents of a totalitarian state about their radio listening habits and political attitudes. Both the GDR's State Radio Committee and the United States government went to great lengths to assemble data on listening habits. Using letters, listener surveys, and audience assemblies, radio officials on both sides of the Iron Curtain sought to determine listener concerns and habits as a means of both determining effectiveness and as a means of crafting new programming goals. While the sample groups for these surveys were not always representative, the results of these efforts had a critical effect on how both sides of the radio war shaped their news broadcasting and programming. The considerable efforts taken on the part of the SED to attack RIAS and its audience further demonstrates that many East Germans frequently listened to the station. Officials and USIA policy makers also believed the results of these surveys presented an accurate picture of audience concerns and listening habits.

Drawing on these sources, we can make a number of conclusions about listening habits in East Germany. First, with the exception of a brief period in the late 1950s, individuals who crossed the East-West Berlin border and were polled by both the USIS and DIVOS consistently chose RIAS as their preferred news source. Second, when they did not list RIAS as their favorite information source in 1957 and 1958, they almost always cited reception difficulties and jamming as the reason they had turned to another station, and not any problems with the station's programming. Third, individuals who had fled East Germany to live permanently in West Germany usually listened to RIAS's programs and looked to the programs as a window into the West. Fourth, although these individuals were not necessarily representative of the East German population as a whole,

when polled they noted that their compatriots who remained behind the Iron Curtain listened to RIAS as a source for news. Finally, the East German government took RIAS seriously, and strongly believed that its population actively listened to the American station.

Radio reporters in both Berlins hoped to use radio to shape political attitudes and build public opinion. In this sense, they were following, whether conscious or not, principles established by journalists such as Walter Lippmann, who noted in 1922 that, “The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported, and imagined.”⁵ Individuals relied on the press to better understand the world around them. However, Lippmann continued, individuals were not necessarily equipped to confront the full complexity of the world around them. As a result, the public and press both pursued a process of selection and reduction aimed at presenting a simplified image for readers. The press was a critical player in crafting stereotypes, symbols, and narratives. Subsequently, these same symbols and narratives played a critical role in shaping interpretation and public consensus.

Yet, listeners were not passive recipients of news broadcasts, blindly hearing and absorbing information. They were critical thinkers who saw a radio station as a conduit linking listeners with the policies and ideological worldviews of a particular station’s government sponsor. While most letters written to both RIAS and stations in the German Democratic Republic focused on programming, many concerned official government policies. For example, in the late 1940s, Berliner Rundfunk listeners wrote to the station to inquire about the status of German POWs still incarcerated in the Soviet Union. Listeners expected radio stations to be aware of the policies and goals of their

⁵ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: MacMillan Company, [1922] 1950) 29.

government sponsors. This was particularly pointed with how listeners wrote to RIAS. The American station stood as a kind of *ersatz* embassy in West Berlin. During the Berlin airlift, listeners wrote to the station as a way of thanking US pilots and the United States as a whole for its efforts on behalf of West Berlin. Throughout the 1950s, listeners also came to see RIAS as a source for information on East Germany. Listeners inquired about transit rights between the two Germanys, and about US policies. The word of RIAS was the word of the United States itself. East German listeners visiting West Berlin often visited the station to provide information of their own. In reaction to the station's popularity, the *Stasi* harassed listeners, intercepted letters, and arrested individuals because of their connections to the so-called center for espionage.

Three broad, interconnected factors contributed to RIAS's popularity in East Germany and came to shape the dynamics and character of broadcasting in Cold War Berlin. First, the GDR never achieved legitimacy as a viable state. The economic miracle in West Germany, coupled with the unpopularity and ineffectiveness of the SED's own economic policies, led millions to flee the German Democratic Republic throughout the 1950s. At the same time, the SED could never escape the impression that it was a puppet of the Soviet Union. The June 17, 1953 uprising only confirmed the GDR's lack of viability, as its leaders were only restored to power with the intervention of Soviet military forces. RIAS's crucial role in the uprising also demonstrated both the popularity of the American broadcaster and the general apathy of the East German people towards the GDR's own broadcasters. Despite the blow the event dealt to the GDR's legitimacy, June 17, 1953 came to occupy a central place within the political broadcasts of East Germany's radio stations. For both reporters and the *Stasi*, the uprising

confirmed their worst fears about RIAS and American intentions in East Germany. From files produced by the *Stasi*, it is clear that the SED believed RIAS played an active role in the uprising. Thus, June 17 was evidence of American fascism's belligerent and unyielding goal of destroying the GDR. Subsequently, using radio, the press, cartoons, and posters, the SED promoted a siege mentality in which the GDR was persistently on the precipice of being destroyed by American spies and West German led reactionaries. RIAS was the tool of both. Thus, a curious paradox pervaded East German broadcasts. Whereas on the one hand, reporters insisted that communism's ultimate victory was inevitable, at the same time they spoke of constant threats to the viability of the GDR and depicted a socialist state infested with deviant individuals, saboteurs, counter-revolutionaries, and fascists. Consequently, the GDR's broadcasters ended up highlighting its very fragility. The reports on the construction of the Berlin Wall were the logical result of these arguments. Commentaries by von Schnitzler and Gerhard Eisler trumpeted the Berlin Wall as a symbol of strength, defiance, and resolution. By constructing the barrier, the GDR had demonstrated to the United States and Federal Republic that it could not be destroyed from within.

The second factor contributing to RIAS's popularity was the lack of credibility on the part of its competition: the East German radio stations. The constant and pervasive influence of the SED's specific interpretation of Marxist-Leninist ideology on broadcasting severely weakened the quality of news broadcasting in the GDR, and sent listeners away to other information sources. When it was initially founded, the staffers at Berliner Rundfunk sought to forge bonds with non-communists and build an anti-fascist consensus. However, this policy was largely abandoned once the Cold War erupted in

1947. While Berliner Rundfunk openly supported the Soviet position that the US backed Marshall Plan and its economic policies in Germany were designed to divide the country and make it an imperial fief of American capitalism, the station's Intendant Heinz Schmidt attempted to present a partial balance in the station's broadcasts, hiring western trained journalists like Herbert Gessner and Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler to work as journalists for the station. The station also frequently cited Western critics of the Truman Administration such as Walter Lippmann and Henry Wallace. However, in the shadow of the Berlin blockade of 1948, Berliner Rundfunk's claims that the United States was a war mongering state could not mask the fact that the Soviets were the ones blockading the city. The success of the Berlin airlift further damaged Berliner Rundfunk's credibility, especially since it had so confidently ridiculed the operation's prospects for success in the summer of 1948.

By late 1949, the SED concluded that Schmidt's attempts to win over western audiences by downplaying Marxism-Leninism were counterproductive. The SED leadership subsequently dismissed Schmidt from his post because of his so-called "objective" reporting. Schmidt's dismissal initiated a process that would last until 1952 during which the SED centralized all broadcasting operations in Berlin and established programming designed to actively promote Marxist-Leninist doctrine and support for the SED and Soviet Union. The SED's radio schools dedicated themselves to creating reporters capable of elucidating Marxist-Leninist principles. At the same time, it also schooled reporters in the German Communist master narratives, instructing them to present a world divided between the antagonistic camps of progressive socialism and imperialist capitalism.

The lack of response on the part of the GDR's broadcasters during the June 17, 1953 workers' uprising made it appear out of touch and to be an unreliable news source. Compounding this, every time officials in the State Radio Committee concluded that something needed to be done to win back listeners, the SED chose to strengthen the ideological influence over East German broadcasting. Many East German reporters knew that the propagandistic tone and character of the GDR's news broadcasts were sending East German listeners to RIAS to receive information. Yet, these efforts were always met with a crackdown from the ruling SED and a reassertion of state control over broadcasting. Unable and not necessarily willing to make their political programming more appealing to a mass audience, the GDR's State Radio Committee improved cultural programming as a means of drawing listeners away from RIAS. At the same time, the SED Department of Agitation and GDR Ministry for State Security launched a concerted campaign targeting East Germans who listened to RIAS. If the SED could not convince East Germans to listen to GDR radio, it could at least try and prevent them from listening to anything else.

In combating the declining popularity of its news programming, the GDR broadcasters tried to implement what Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann has described as a "spiral of silence." Noelle-Neumann argues that individuals' fundamentally fear isolation. Since deviant and vagrant opinions often lead to isolation, individuals seek out the majority opinion. As a result, the fear of isolation led individuals to publicly embrace what appeared to be the majority attitude and conceal any divergent attitudes they may have. The act of trying to determine and assess majority attitudes, coupled with the active concealment of minority attitudes, was the critical factor in the formation of public

opinion. Thus, the majority opinion was actually a “spiral of silence,” as individuals’ fear of isolation led them to keep any divergent attitudes they may have a secret.⁶

The belief that a “spiral of silence” helped shape public political attitudes informed how reporters in the GDR actually presented major news stories. The stations in the GDR always spoke as if they were addressing the majority, whether it was the people of Berlin, the German nation, or the people of the world. In most cases, reporters spoke of broad, unifying interests and criticized those, whether listeners or political figures, who diverged from these common goals. For the GDR’s broadcasters, the fundamental image was the conflict between prevailing, accepted opinion and vagrant, destructive worldviews. As a consequence, East German reporters not only criticized divergent opinions and attitudes, but also condemned them as criminal and pro-fascist. East German stations characterized the emerging political rivalries in Germany as a conflict between the majority antifascist opinion and the deviant, pro-fascist, minority opinion. Thus, when individuals such as Kurt Schumacher publicly attacked the Soviet backed fusion of the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party in the Eastern Zone, Berliner Rundfunk not only accused him of being a fascist and a traitor to the German left, but also the holder of an aberrant, abnormal opinion that was at odds with both the wishes and interests of the German people and nation. This approach informed how journalists working for Berliner Rundfunk and its sister stations throughout the GDR presented the major events associated with the early Cold War, such as the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Berlin blockade. The capitalist elites of the United States, according to Berliner Rundfunk’s reports, aimed to reassert fascist

⁶ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion—Our Social Skin*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

dominance over Europe. Only the socialist camp, led by the Soviet Union, represented the true interests and wishes of Europe and the world.

This approach did not just inform how reporters presented major events however. The belief in a “spiral of silence” also defined how East German officials and journalists confronted the issue of individuals listening to non-GDR stations such as RIAS. Through leaflets, cartoons, posters, and news reports, East German propaganda officials and reporters constructed the image of the gullible RIAS listener, fooled into believing the American station’s false promises of prosperity. The gullible listener had a sinister side as well, and East German propaganda often depicted him being manipulated into serving the United States as a spy and saboteur. This image informed how the East German government explained the June 17, 1953 uprising. Throughout the remainder of the 1950s, until the construction of the Berlin Wall, the image of a criminal, subversive minority trying to overthrow the GDR permeated East German radio broadcasts. Reporters characterized the refugees streaming across the West-East Berlin border as either individuals easily fooled by Western lies or criminals.

In many ways, however, the anti-RIAS propaganda campaign was evidence of the ultimate inability on the part of the GDR to construct a viable alternative to RIAS. Unable to attract listeners with a credible and popular information source, the GDR simply attacked people who listened to other, non-GDR stations. Initially, East German reporters such as Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler and Herbert Gessner recognized that the GDR had failed to produce a compelling or convincing narrative to counter RIAS’s claims. During the days immediately following the June 17 uprising, GDR radio stations argued that they were out of synch with the majority of listeners. Thus, it was East

German broadcasters' failure to acknowledge and embrace the popular attitudes and concerns of the GDR's population that allowed an event such as June 17 to occur. East German officials quickly rejected this approach however, and soon broadcasts and cartoons began blaming the uprising on a malleable and deviant minority manipulated by RIAS into staging a counterrevolutionary coup.

By pursuing journalism that engaged and undermined the GDR but also presented accurate news and information, RIAS was able to exploit the problems afflicting the GDR's media organs. The American station's ability to take advantage of its opponent's weaknesses constitutes the third reason RIAS consistently stood as the most popular news source in the GDR. When RIAS was created in 1946, its founders in the US Occupation Government hoped that the station would serve as an example of traditional standards of objective reporting that stressed not only accuracy, but also impartiality and non-bias. However, tensions erupted within RIAS's staff as American control officers like Gus Mathieu and Ruth Norden avoided open confrontation with the Soviets despite the fact that the Soviet backed Berliner Rundfunk attacked US policies and the democratic order in West Berlin. The best means of confronting the Soviets, officials argued, was to use RIAS as an example of neutral, impartial journalism. In the politically tense atmosphere of Berlin during the immediate postwar years, with the city's democratic parties under constant attack from the SED and its Soviet sponsors, such an approach was largely unpopular amongst West Berlin statesmen like Ernst Reuter.

By the fall of 1947, RIAS had ended its policy of neutrality. With the outbreak of the Cold War in 1947, the US authorities in Germany deployed RIAS in a multimedia campaign aimed at confronting the Soviet Union and the communists in Germany. While

reporters continued to adhere to the principles of factuality and independence, news broadcasts were rarely balanced, unbiased, or neutral. By 1949, RIAS's primary mission was to provide an alternative news source for East German listeners and attempting to undermine and destabilize the GDR. However, despite this overtly political aim, the station's news staff nevertheless strictly adhered to the principle that news needed to be accurate and presented with little editorial coloration. However, this had as much to do with providing East Germans with a clear, distinct alternative to the GDR's broadcast as it did with promoting liberal-democratic broadcast journalism. By broadcasting accurate information, RIAS was able to shield itself from East German claims that it presented false news to East German listeners. News stories needed to appear on a number of wire services before the station would repeat them. Reporters also drew on information from East Germans visiting the station itself. At the same time, "objective" also denoted a style of presentation. Reporters needed to make clear distinctions between their own ideas and those of their sources. Thus, for RIAS's reporters, "objective" reporting was neither neutral nor unbiased reporting. It was factual reporting designed to achieve a political end. By providing accurate stories about conditions both within the GDR and outside, RIAS appealed to listeners seeking an alternative to the GDR's broadcasters. By presenting programs focusing specifically on life in the GDR, it also forged a strong bond with its audience.

Despite its pursuit of accurate reporting, RIAS nevertheless remained committed to disrupting the legitimacy of the German Democratic Republic. In this regard, "the spiral of silence" described by Noel-Neumann was no less important to RIAS's reporters. Writ large, as soon as RIAS adopted a policy of rigorous, overt anti-communism against

East Germany, broadcast commentators such as Victor Klages and Eugen Hartmann began to characterize a world divided between a totalitarian minority and a democratic majority. Reporters characterized the Soviet camp as a desperate superpower that reacted to its increasing isolation from the world with acts of aggression. According to RIAS, the Czech Coup and Berlin blockade were both launched by the Soviets because they realized that communism did not enjoy popular support. Consequently, the Soviet's decision to resort to non-democratic means to achieve its goals in 1948 was spurred on by communism's failure to achieve a broad base with the majority of the European population. The dichotomy continued to shape RIAS reports throughout the 1950s. RIAS broadcasts didn't just depict Soviet and East German actions such as the suppression of the June 17 uprising, the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, and the construction of the Berlin Wall as politically oppressive acts. The station's reporters characterized the actions as crimes against humanity.

At the same time, RIAS sought to prevent the creation of a "spiral of silence" in East Germany by refuting the GDR's claims that only a deviant few listened to RIAS, criticized the SED, and supported West Germany. RIAS reports focused on reassuring listeners that their opinions and attitudes about the SED were actually shared by their compatriots. In the face of the GDR's media monopoly, RIAS provided East German listeners with one of the few sources of news that diverged from the official SED position. While GDR broadcasters sought to create a world divided between fascists and antifascists and accused those of sharing a supposedly minority opinion as vagrants and deviants, RIAS consciously sought to stress that a division existed between the East German people and the ruling SED. RIAS asserted that the East German people were

uninterested in the construction of a communist system. Instead, they sought the unification of Germany and democratic rights. Consequently, when Egon Bahr and Eberhard Schütz began reporting the June 17 uprising, they immediately proclaimed it was a peoples' uprising and mass plea for German unity. By linking what was at first a demonstration against increased work quotas to the aspirations of German unification, RIAS's reporters hoped to transform the protests into a national movement.

The selection and presentation of news stories often resulted in the simplification of major arguments and ideas. For the stations in the GDR, the prevailing influence on broadcast reporting was the anti-fascist narrative. East German broadcasters characterized the world as being divided into two antagonistic camps: the capitalist imperialist camp and the communist democratic camp. The latter represented peace and progress, the former war and reaction. This narrative drew upon old German Communist traditions that had originally asserted that Nazism was the principle fascist enemy. With Nazism defeated, the United States and West Germany became the new fascist enemies. GDR stations developed and varied this theme in a number of ways. During the late 1940s, the station characterized the United States as an imperialist force attempting to resurrect fascism in West Germany and use the Marshall Plan to divide the German people.

Despite its stated goal of presenting accurate, "straight" news broadcasts, RIAS also frequently deployed explanatory narratives itself. If the GDR saw a world divided between fascists and antifascists, RIAS saw it divided between totalitarian states and democratic states. The German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union were totalitarian governments akin to the Nazis. RIAS reporters such as Victor Klages and

Heinz Frentzel downplayed the ideological distinctions between Soviet communism and National Socialism. Throughout the 1950s, RIAS contended that continuities existed from the Nazi regime to the SED regime. Both movements were interested only in the acquisition and maintenance of power. Both sought to trample the rights of its citizens and eliminate basic civil rights. Journalists grounded this approach, which focused more on structural similarities and less on historical specificity, on both journalistic and ideological necessity. Political goals and concerns often overrode the need to discuss historical distinctions. As the station's political director, Gordon Ewing, noted during RIAS's 1952 campaign against the GDR's collective contracts, it was critical that RIAS present itself as a champion of German worker and civil rights as not only a means of attacking the legitimacy of the SED, but also as a means of protecting RIAS from the accusation that it was simply a mouthpiece for fascism resurgent in the United States and West Germany. Anti-totalitarianism was consequently a critical means of confronting communism without adopting the Nazi style rhetoric of anti-Bolshevism. In this sense, the station adopted the anti-communist rhetoric of the West Berlin Social Democratic Party used by Ernst Reuter and Willy Brandt.

The United States and Soviet Union waged the Cold War using a wide range of means. In Berlin during the 1950s, we can see how the conflict was fought using the mass media. The media war as a complex conflict in which both sides struggled with issues such as objectivity, accuracy, and the fundamental purpose of radio broadcasting. At the same time, listeners looked to radio as a means of acquiring information about the Cold War conflict and as a window to the outside world. As much as the two sides of the radio conflict struggled to win audiences, it is always important to remember that

audiences often listened to multiple stations and were often aware when politics shaped broadcasts. Thus, when we consider RIAS, it is perhaps best to remember that it not only tried to broadcast accurate information to the East German people, but also broadcast an alternative viewpoint. Its ability to provide a narrative that countered the official statements of the SED meant that, as long as the station could broadcast into the German Democratic Republic, the communist state would also struggle to build a legitimate foundation. If there is a lesson to be drawn from the Berlin radio war, it is that the mass media cannot just help a state develop a stable political order. It can also create instability and disrupt a state's very attempts to achieve legitimacy.

Appendix: East German Anti-RIAS Propaganda

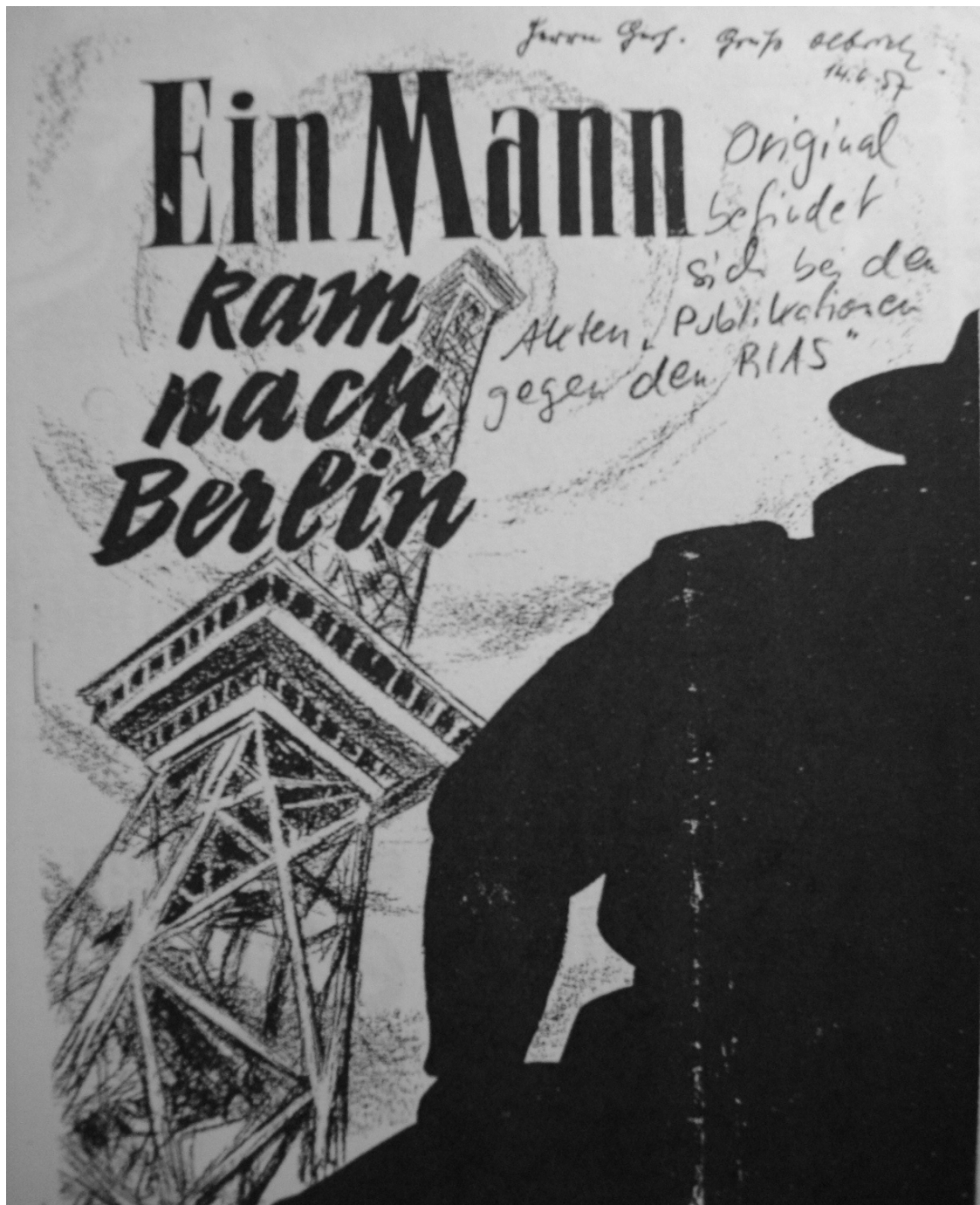


Image no. 1: “A Man Comes to Berlin,” (*Ein Man kam nach Berlin*, Cover). (Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM))



Image no. 2: "These were Mr. Dalcher's special achievements when he was in Austria," (from *Ein Man kam nach Berlin*, pages 4-5). (Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM))

Das sind die Organisatoren



John Foster Dulles, US-Außenminister.
Ihm untersteht offiziell der RIAS. Es gibt kein Verbrechen der amerikanischen Imperialisten in den vergangenen Jahren und in der Gegenwart, bei dem er nicht seine Hände im Spiel hatte und hat.

Herbert Hoover jun., John Foster Dulles' Stellvertreter,
„managt die delikateren Sachen“. Zum zehnjährigen Verbrecher-Jubiläum des RIAS sprach er vor versammelter Mannschaft „von der Vorpostenarbeit des RIAS für die ‚freie Welt‘“.



Allan B. Dulles, Oberster Chef der US-Geheimdienste, leitet über eine Sonderabteilung des US-Außenministeriums die 5. Kolonne der USA im Ausland und damit auch den RIAS.



W. B. Jackson, Chef des „Institutes für psychologische Kriegsführung“,
Ist Allan Dulles der Organisator, so ist Jackson der geistige Urheber vieler Verbrechen und Verleumdungskampagnen, die unter anderem auch vom RIAS gestartet wurden.



Eleanor Dulles, Sonderbeauftragte ihrer Brüder in Europa, deren besonderes Protektionskind der RIAS ist. Es gibt keine weittragende Aktion dieser Agentenzentrale, die sie nicht selbst einfädelt. In regelmäßigen Abständen kommt sie nach Berlin-W., und dann wissen die RIAS-Leute, daß etwas im Gange ist.

General Lucius D. Clay gehört als ehemaliger Chef der US-Militärregierung in Westdeutschland bekanntlich zu jenen, die unmittelbar nach 1945 die Spaltung Deutschlands betrieben. Er ist Gesellschafter der Morgan-Gruppe und außerdem einer der Leiter des Komitees „Freies Europa“, das sich vor allem der Tätigkeit der Sender „Freies Europa“ und RIAS annimmt.



Image no. 3: “These are the Organizers,” (from *Ein Man kam nach Berlin*, pages 6-7). (Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM))

Die Hintermänner

Die Geschwister Dulles, Hoover, Clay und Jackson sind wie jeder andere Agent und Spion gleichfalls nur Befehlsempfänger – nur daß sie von ihren Herren besser bezahlt und mit hohen Posten „belohnt“ werden. Die wahren Chefs des RIAS sind die Konzerngewaltigen der USA. Von ihnen wird auch der RIAS finanziert.

500 Millionen Dollar Kapital umfaßt die sogenannte Ford-Stiftung. Ihre Mittel wurden „zur Unterstützung der Kräfte, die der Sowjetunion feindlich gesinnt sind“, ausgegeben, sagte Mr. Paul Hoffmann, der „Kurator“ dieser Stiftung.

Fast ebensoviel Dollar fließen aus der Rockefeller- und Carnegie-Stiftung.



Ford füttert Clay

To put the problem in a nutshell - our policy must be both "global" i.e. embrace every part of the world and also "total" i.e. include political, psychological, economic, military and special methods integrated into one whole.



„In einem Wort – unsere Politik muß sowohl global sein, d. h. alle Teile der Welt umfassen, als auch total, d. h. politische, psychologische, ökonomische, militärische und besondere Methoden zu einem Ganzen zusammengeslossen.“ (Nelson A. Rockefeller an Eisenhower).

Auch der einfache amerikanische Steuerzahler muß für die Wülfarbeit des RIAS zahlen. Am 10. Oktober 1951 billigte der amerikanische Kongreß einen Hundert-Millionen-Fonds für die „Finanzierung der Tätigkeit der illegalen Befreiungsbewegung in den kommunistischen Ländern“. Aus diesen Quellen erhält der RIAS jährlich 2,7 Millionen Dollar.

◀ Drahtzieher Rockefeller

2,7 Millionen für Provokationen

Mit diesen 2,7 Millionen Dollar werden die verbrecherischen Anschläge des RIAS gegen die Deutsche Demokratische Republik finanziert! Mit diesen 2,7 Millionen Dollar wurde die faschistische Provokation am 17. Juni 1953 vorbereitet!

„In der Nacht zum 18. Juni 1953 kablete der Berliner Korrespondent der ‚New York Times‘, Walter Sullivan, nach New York: „Es wäre niemals zu Unruhen gekommen, wären nicht die Sendungen des RIAS gewesen.“

Mit diesen 2,7 Millionen Dollar kauft der RIAS Spione und Saboteure gegen die DDR!

„Kein Regierungsbeamter wird es zugeben, aber wir bilden Männer als Spione, Saboteure und Spezialisten in den härtesten Formen der Psychologischen Kriegsführung aus... Sie lernen, wie man Brücken, Eisenbahnzüge und Rüstungsfabriken sprengt...“

Im Juli 1955 wurde u. a. der ehemalige RIAS-Agent Eberhard Lübbert zu 10 Jahren Zuchthaus verurteilt. Neben Spionage betrieb Lübbert vor allem Sabotage. Außer Maschinen und Kühlanlagen beschädigte er im Fischkombinat Rostock 20 Traktoren. Schließlich wollte er mit seinen Komplizen einen Turmdrehkran sprengen. Auf die Vorhaltungen des Gerichts, daß dabei Menschen ums Leben gekommen wären, antwortete er: „Man hätte es nicht ändern können.“

(„Nation's Business“, April 1952)

Mit diesen 2,7 Millionen Dollar werden Lügen, Verdrehungen, Greueltgeschichten fabriziert, die die Bevölkerung der DDR gegen die Staatsmacht aufbringen und eine Panikstimmung entfachen sollen. „Schwarze Propaganda“ nennt man das in Agentenkreisen. Anthony Leviero (Spezialist für Sabotageangelegenheiten) schrieb in der „New York Times“ dazu:

„Die ‚Schwarze Propaganda‘ gibt die Quelle nicht an oder fälscht sie und kann Gewaltanwendung, Verbreitung von Gerüchten, das Zustandebringen und Propagieren von Skandalen und andere Tätigkeiten einschließen, die dazu bestimmt sind, Verwirrung anzurichten.“

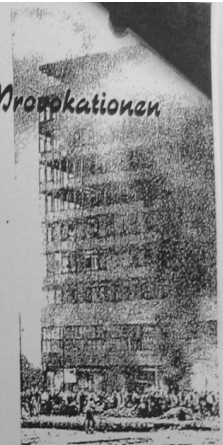


Image no. 4: “The Men Behind the Scenes,” (from *Ein Man kam nach Berlin*, pages 8-9). (Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM))

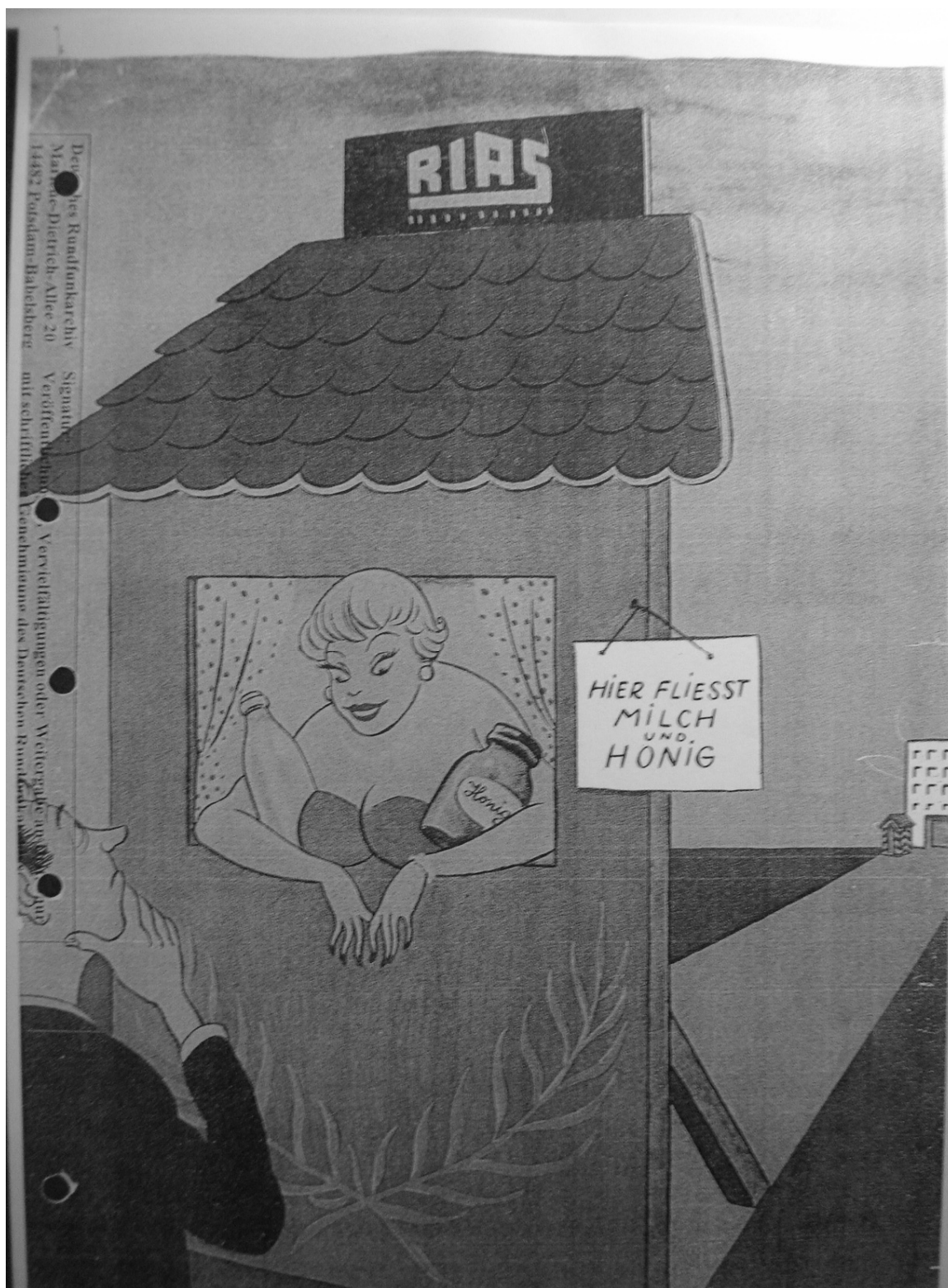


Image no. 5: "Here flows Milk and Honey." Cartoon from *Eulenspiegel*, February 1, 1956. (Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (DRA) Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, F 304-01-04/0004).

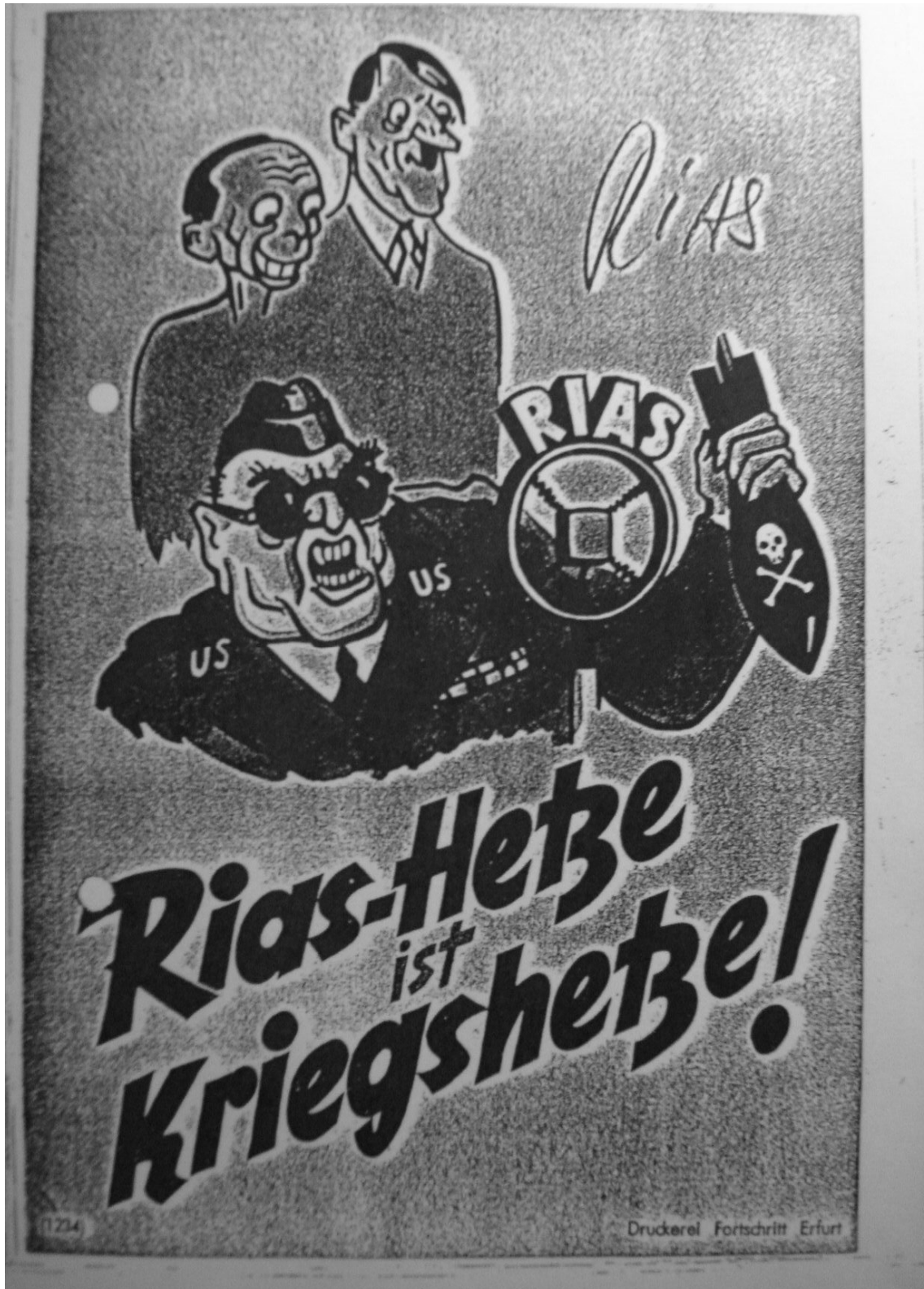


Image no. 6: "RIAS Hounding is War Hounding," Undated Cartoon. (DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, F 304-01-04/0004).



Image no. 7: “Who solicits agents and saboteurs in Frankfurt an der Oder? Who wants to destroy our cities? Who endangers the happiness of your children? It is RIAS!” (DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, F 304-01-04/0004).

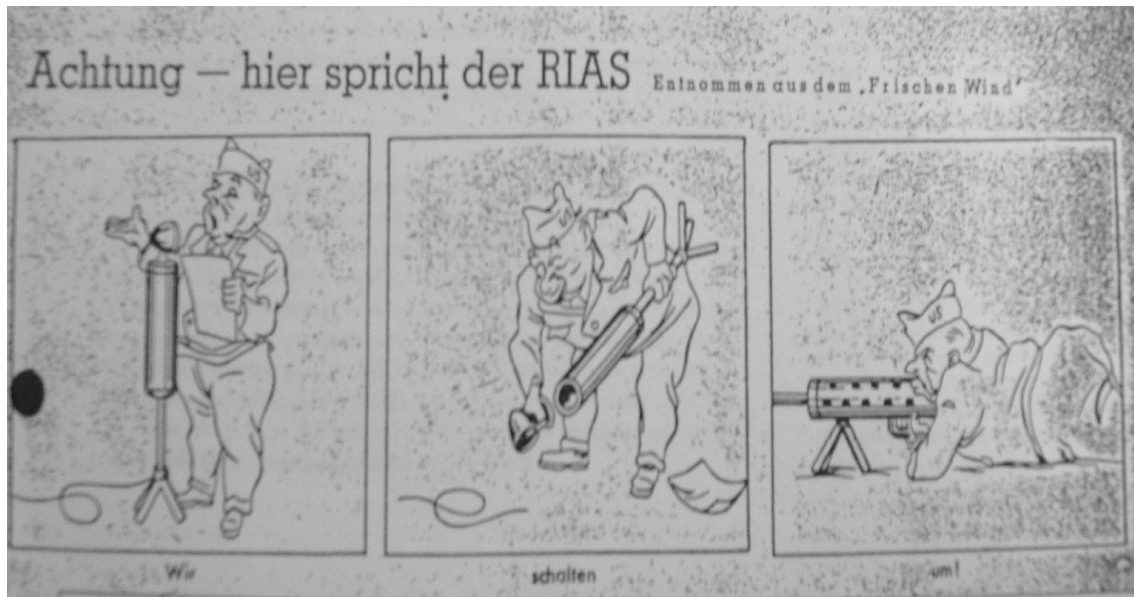


Image 8: “Attention---this is RIAS: We’re switching gears,” from *Espenhainer Stimme*, May 22, 1952. (DRA Potsdam, RIAS Depositum, F 304-01-04/0004).

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DR 6 Staatliches Komitee für Rundfunk

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B 203	Sendemanuskripten
B 204	Sendemanuskripten
B 086	Sendemanuskripten
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404-00-04	Hörerdienst
102-00-00	Intendanz
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403-01-06	Presse und Funkauswertung
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204-00-02	Programmredaktion
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